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Short Story Index

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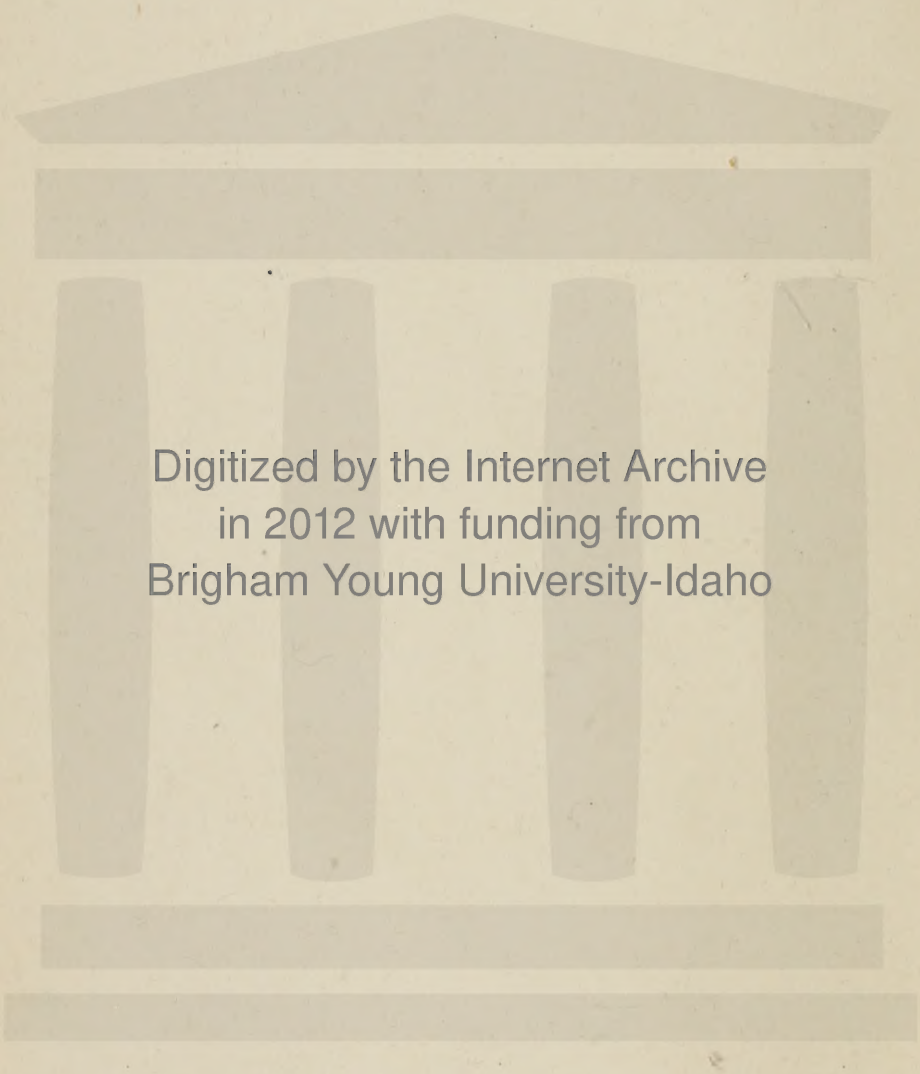
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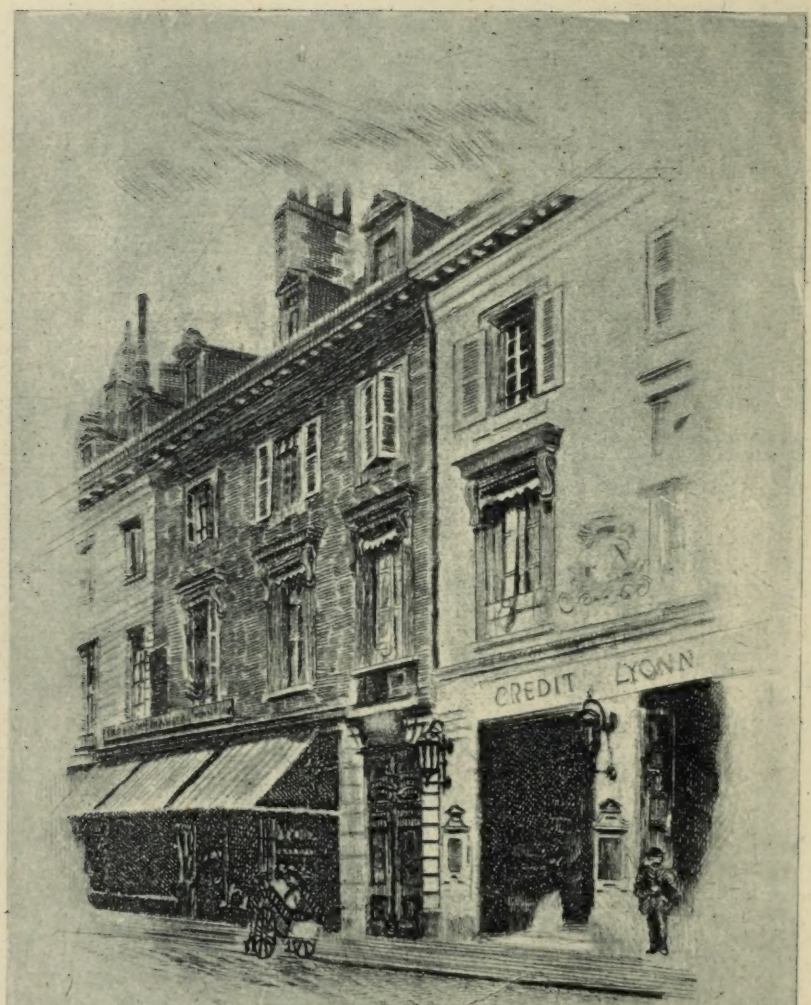

Balzac's Birthplace, rue Royale, Tours.

Short Story Index

THE WORKS OF HONORÉ DE BALZAC

BÉATRIX

THE JEALOUSIES OF A COUNTRY TOWN

and

THE COMMISSION IN LUNACY

With Introductions by

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

THE NOTTINGHAM SOCIETY

NEW YORK PHILADELPHIA CHICAGO

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BÉATRIX

INTRODUCTION

Béatrix was built up in the odd fashion in which Balzac sometimes did build up his novels, and which may be thought to account for an occasional lack of unity and grasp in them. The original book, written in 1838, and published with the rather flowery dedication "to Sarah" at the end of that year, stopped at the marriage of Calyste and Sabine. The last part, separately entitled *Un Adultère Rétrospectif*, was not added till six years later. It cannot be said to be either very shocking or very unnatural that the young husband should exemplify the truth of that uncomfortable proverb, *Qui a bu boira;* and it is perhaps rather more surprising that Balzac should have allowed him to be "refished" (as the French say) in a finally satisfactory condition by his lawful spouse.

Still, I do not think the addition can be considered on the whole an improvement to the book, of which it is at the best rather an appendix than an integral part. The conception of Béatrix herself seems to have changed somewhat, and that not as the conception of her immortal namesake in *Esmond* and *The Virginians* changes, merely to suit the irreparable outrage of years. The end has unsavory details, which have not, as the repetition of them in more tragic form a little later in *La Cousine Bette* has, the justification of a really tragic retribution; and a man must have a great deal of disinterested good nature about him to feel any satisfaction, or indeed to take much interest, in the restoration of the domestic happi-

ness of two such persons as M. and Mme. de Rochefide. Calyste du Guénic, whose character was earlier rather exaggerated, is now almost a caricature, and to me at least the thing is not much excused by the fact that it gives Balzac an opportunity of introducing his pattern gentleman-scoundrel, Maxime de Trailles, and his pet Bohemian, La Palférine. The many-named Italian here indeed plays a comparatively benevolent part, as does Trailles; but they are both as great "raffs" and "tigers" as ever.

The first and larger part of the book, on the other hand,—the book proper, as we may call it,—is a remarkable, a well-designed, and a very interesting study. It is not so much of an additional attraction to me, as it perhaps is to most people, that contemporaries, without much contradiction, or in all cases improbability, chose to regard the parts and personages of Félicité des Touches, Béatrix de Rochefide, Claude Vignon, and the musician Conti, as designed, and pretty closely designed, after George Sand, Madame d'Agoult (known as "Daniel Stern"), Gustave Planche, the critic, and Liszt. As to the first pair, there can, of course, be no doubt; for Balzac, by representing "Camille Maupin" as George Sand's rival, and by introducing divers ingenious and legitimate adaptations of the famous she-novelist's career, both invites, and in a way authorizes, the attribution. There is nothing offensive in it; indeed, Félicité is one of the most effective and sympathetic of his female characters, and would always have been incapable of the rather heartless action by which the actual George Sand amused herself intellectually and sentimentally with lover after lover, and then threw them away. Unless the accounts of Planche that we have are very unfair—and they possibly are, for he

was a critic, and was particularly obnoxious to the extreme Romantic school, which was perhaps why Balzac liked him—Claude Vignon is a still more flattered portrait, though Balzac's low, if not quite impartial, opinion of critics in general comes out in it. Conti may be fair enough for Liszt; and if Béatrix is certainly a libel on poor Madame d'Agoult, it must be remembered that this later Madame de Staël was generally misrepresented in her lifetime, though since her death she has had more justice.

The "key"-interest of books, however, is always a minor, and sometimes a purely illegitimate one. It ought to be sufficient for us that the interest of the quartette, even if there had been no such persons as George Sand, Daniel Stern, Planche, and Liszt in the world, would be very great, and that it is well composed with and maintained by the accessory and auxiliary facts and characters. The picture of the Guénic household (which, after Balzac's usual fashion, throws us back to *Les Chouans,* while Béatrix as a Castéran, and thus a connection of the luckless Mlle. de Verneuil, is also connected with that book) may seem to some to be a little too fully painted; it does not seem so to me. Whether, as hinted above, the character of Calyste has its childishness exaggerated or not, I must leave to readers to decide for themselves. His casting of Béatrix into the sea, besides being illegal, may seem to some extravagant; but it must be remembered that Balzac was originally writing when the heyday of the Romantic movement was by no means over, and when melodrama was still pretty fully in fashion. It is difficult, too, to see what better contrast and uniting scheme for the contrasted worldliness of the four chief characters could have been devised; while the childishness itslf is not

inconceivable or unnatural in a boy brought up in a sort of household of romance by a heroic father and a doting mother, both utterly unworldly, his head being further fired by participating in actual civil war on behalf of an injured princess, and his heart exposed without preparation to such different influences as those of Mlle. des Touches and of Béatrix.

The contrast of the two ladies is also fine; indeed, Béatrix seems to me, though by no means Balzac's most perfect work, to be an attempt in a higher style of novel writing than any other heroine of his. It is impossible not to suspect in Félicité, good, clever, and so forth as she is, a covert satire on the variety of womankind which had begun to be fashionable. The satire on the unamiable side of mere womanliness which the sketch of Béatrix contains is, of course, open and undeniable. I think that Thackeray has far excelled it, but I am not certain that he was not indebted to it as a pattern. The fault of the French Béatrix has been expressed by her creator on nearly the last page of the book. A woman *sans cœur ni tete* may do a great deal of mischief; but she cannot quite play the part attributed to Madame de Rochefide.

The first two parts of *Béatrix* (in which Madame de Rochefide was at first called Roche*gude*) appeared in the *Siècle during* April and May 1839, with the alternative title *ou les Amours Forcés,* and they were published in book form by Souverain in the same year. They were then divided briefly: the first part, which was called *Moeurs D'Autrefois* in the *Siècle,* and *Une Famille Patriarcale* in the book, had eight headed chapters; the second (*Moeurs d'Aujourhui* in the first, *Une Femme Célèbre* in the second) eleven; and a

third division, *Les Rivalités,* eight. As a *Scène de la Vie Privée,* which it became in 1842, it had no chapters; it was little altered otherwise; and the present completion was anticipated, though not given, in a final paragraph. It also had the simple title of *Béatrix.* The completion itself did not appear till the midwinter (December-January) of 1844-45. It was first called *Les Petits Manèges d'une Femme Vertueuse* in the *Messager,* and when, shortly afterwards, it was published by Chlendowski as a book, *La Lune de Miel.* In these forms it had fifty-nine headed chapters. In the same year, however, it became, with its forerunners, part of the *Comédie,* and the chapters were swept away throughout. G. S.

BÉATRIX

To Sarah

In clear weather, on the Mediterranean shore, where formerly your name held elegant sway, the waves sometimes allow us to perceive beneath the mist of waters a sea-flower, one of Nature's masterpieces: the lacework of its tissue, tinged with purple, russet, rose, violet, or gold, the crispness of that living filagree, the velvet texture, all vanish as soon as curiosity draws it forth and spreads it on the strand.

Thus would the glare of publicity offend your tender modesty; so, in dedicating this work to you, I must reserve a name which would indeed be its pride. But under the shelter of this half concealment, your superb hands may bless it, your noble brow may bend and dream over it, your eyes, full of motherly love, may smile upon it, since you are here at once present and veiled. Like that gem of the ocean-garden, you will dwell on the fine white level sand where your beautiful life expands, hidden by a wave that is transparent only to certain friendly and reticent eyes.

I would gladly have laid at your feet a work in harmony with your perfections; but as that was impossible, I knew, for my consolation, that I was gratifying one of your instincts by offering you something to protect.

DE BALZAC.

PART I

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

FRANCE, and more especially Brittany, still has some few towns that stand entirely outside the social movement which gives a character to the nineteenth century. For lack of rapid and constant communications with Paris, connected only by an ill-made road with the prefecture or chief town to which

they belong, these places hear and see modern civilization pass by like a spectacle; they are amazed, but they do not applaud; and whether they fear it or make light of it, they remain faithful to the antiquated manners of which they preserve the stamp. Any one who should travel as a moral archæologist, and study men instead of stones, might find a picture of the age of Louis XV. in some village of Provence, that of the time of Louis XIV. in the depths of Poitou, that of yet remoter ages in the heart of Brittany.

Most of these places have fallen from some splendor of which history has kept no record, busied as it is with facts and dates rather than manners, but of which the memory still survives in tradition; as in Brittany, where the character of the people allows no forgetfulness of anything that concerns the home country. Many of these towns have been the capital of some little feudal territory—a county or a duchy conquered by the Crown, or broken up by inheritors in default of a direct male line. Then, deprived of their activity, these heads became arms; the arms, bereft of nutrition, have dried up and merely vegetate; and within these thirty years these images of remote times are beginning to die out and grow very rare.

Modern industry, toiling for the masses, goes on destroying the creations of ancient art, for its outcome was as personal to the purchaser as to the maker. We have *products* nowadays; we no longer have works. Buildings play a large part in the phenomena of retrospection; but to industry, buildings are stone-quarries or saltpetre mines, or storehouses for cotton. A few years more and these primitive towns will be transformed, known no more excepting in this literary iconography.

One of the towns where the physiognomy of the feudal ages is still most plainly visible is Guérande. The name alone will revive a thousand memories in the mind of painters, artists, and thinkers who may have been to the coast and have seen this noble gem of feudality proudly perched where it

commands the sand-hills and the strand at low tide, the top corner, as it were, of a triangle at whose other points stand two not less curious relicts—le Croisic and le Bourg de Batz. Besides Guérande there are but two places—Vitré, in the very centre of Brittany, and Avignon in the south—which preserve their mediæval aspect and features intact in the midst of our century.

Guérande is to this day enclosed by mighty walls, its wide moats are full of water, its battlements are unbroken, its loopholes are not filled up with shrubs, the ivy has thrown no mantle over its round and square towers. It has three gates, where the rings may still be seen for suspending the portcullis; it is entered over drawbridges of timber shod with iron, which could be raised, though they are raised no longer. The municipality was blamed in 1820 for planting poplars by the side of the moat to shade the walk; it replied that on the land side, by the sand-hills, for above a hundred years, the fine, long esplanade by the walls, which look as if they had been built yesterday, had been made into a mall overshadowed by elms, where the inhabitants took their pleasure.

The houses have known no changes; they are neither more nor less in number. Not one of them has felt on its face the hammer of the builder, or the brush of the whitewasher, or trembled under the weight of an added story. They all retain their primitive character. Some are raised on wooden columns forming "rows," under which there is a footway, floored with planks that yield but do not break. The shop-dwellings are small and low, and faced with slate shingles. Woodwork, now decayed, has been largely used for carved window-frames; and the beams, prolonged beyond the pillars, project in grotesque heads, or at the angles, in the form of fantastic creatures, vivified by the great idea of Art, which at that time lent life to dead matter. These ancient things, defying the touch of time, offer to painters the brown tones and obliterated lines that they delight in.

The streets are what they were a hundred years ago. Only, as the population is thinner now, as the social stir is less

active, a traveler curious to wander through this town, as fine as a perfect suit of antique armor, may find his way, not untouched by melancholy, down an almost deserted street, where the stone window-frames are choked with concrete to avoid the tax. This street ends at a postern-gate built up with a stone wall, and crowned by a clump of saplings planted there by the hand of Breton Nature—France can hardly show a more luxuriant and all-pervading vegetation. If he is a poet or a painter, our wanderer will sit down, absorbed in the enjoyment of the perfect silence that reigns under the still sharp-cut vaulting of this side gate, whither no sound comes from the peaceful town, whence the rich country may be seen in all its beauty through loopholes, once held by archers and cross-bowmen, which seem placed like the little windows arranged to frame a view from a summer-house.

It is impossible to go through the town without being reminded at every step of the manners and customs of long past times; every stone speaks of them; traditions of the Middle Ages survive there as superstitions. If by chance a gendarme passes in his laced hat, his presence is an anachronism against which the mind protests; but nothing is rarer than to meet a being or a thing of the present. There is little to be seen even of the dress of the day; so much of it as the natives have accepted has become to some extent appropriate to their unchanging habits and hereditary physiognomy. The market-place is filled with Breton costumes, which artists come here to study, and which are amazingly varied. The whiteness of the linen clothes worn by the *paludiers,* the salt-workers who collect salt from the pans in the marshes, contrasts effectively with the blues and browns worn by the inland peasants, and the primitive jewelry piously preserved by the women. These two classes and the jacketed seamen, with their round varnished leather hats, are as distinct as the castes in India, and they still recognize the distinctions that separate the townsfolk, the clergy, and the nobility. Here every landmark still exists; the revolutionary plane found the divisions too rugged and too hard to work over; it would have been notched

if not broken. Here the immutability which Nature has given to zoological species is to be seen in men. In short, even since the revolution of 1830, Guérande is still a place unique, essentially Breton, fervently catholic, silent, meditative, where new ideas can scarcely penetrate.

Its geographical position accounts for this singularity. This pretty town overlooks the salt marshes; its salt is indeed known throughout Brittany as *Sel de Guérande,* and to its merits many of the natives ascribe the excellence of their butter and sardines. It has no communication with the rest of France but by two roads, one leading to Savenay, the chief town of the immediate district, and thence to Saint-Nazaire; and the other by Vannes on to Morbihan. The district road connects it with Nantes by land; that by Saint-Nazaire and then by boat also leads to Nantes. The inland road is used only by the Government, the shorter and more frequented way is by Saint-Nazaire. Between that town and Guérande lies a distance of at least six leagues, which the mails do not serve, and for a very good reason—there are not three travelers by coach a year. Saint-Nazaire is divided from Paimbœuf by the estuary of the Loire, there four leagues in width. The bar of the river makes the navigation by steamboat somewhat uncertain; and to add to the difficulties, there was, in 1829, no landing quay at the cape of Saint-Nazaire; the point ended in slimy shoals and granite reefs, the natural fortifications of its picturesque church, compelling arriving voyagers to fling themselves and their baggage into boats when the sea was high, or, in fine weather, to walk across the rocks as far as the jetty then in course of construction. These obstacles, ill suited to invite the amateur, may perhaps still exist there. In the first place, the authorities move but slowly; and then the natives of this corner of land, which you may see projecting like a tooth on the map of France between Saint-Nazaire, le Bourg de Batz, and le Croisic, are very well content with the hindrances that protect their territory from the incursions of strangers.

Thus flung down on the edge of a continent, Guérande

leads no whither, and no one ever comes there. Happy in being unknown, the town cares only for itself. The centre of the immense produce of the salt marshes, paying not less than a million francs in taxes, is at le Croisic, a peninsular town communicating with Guérande across a tract of shifting sands, where the road traced each day is washed out each night, and by boats indispensable for crossing the inlet which forms the port of le Croisic, and which encroaches on the sand. Thus this charming little town is a Herculaneum of feudalism, *minus* the winding sheet of lava. It stands, but is not alive; its only reason for surviving is that it has not been pulled down.

If you arrive at Guérande from le Croisic, after crossing the tract of salt marshes, you are startled and excited at the sight of this immense fortification, apparently quite new. Coming on it from Saint-Nazaire, its picturesque position and the rural charm of the neighborhood are no less fascinating. The country round it is charming, the hedges full of flowers—honeysuckles, roses, and beautiful shrubs; you might fancy it was an English wild garden planned by a great artist. This rich landscape, so homelike, so little visited, with all the charm of a clump of violets or lily-of-the-valley found in the midst of a forest, is set in an African desert shut in by the ocean—a desert without a tree, without a blade of grass, without a bird, where, on a sunny day, the marsh-men, dressed all in white, and scattered at wide intervals over the dismal flats where the salt is collected, look just like Arabs wrapped in their burnouse. Indeed, Guérande, with its pretty scenery inland, and its desert bounded on the right by le Croisic and on the left by Batz, is quite unlike anything else to be seen by the traveler in France. The two types of nature so strongly contrasted and linked by this last monument of feudal life, are quite indescribably striking. The town itself has the effect on the mind that a soporific has on the body; it is as soundless as Venice.

There is no public conveyance but that of a carrier who transports travelers, parcels, and possibly letters, in a

wretched vehicle, from Saint-Nazaire to Guérande or back again. Bernus, the driver of this conveyance, was, in 1829, the factotum of the whole community. He goes as he likes, the whole country knows him, he does everybody's commissions. The arrival of a carriage is an immense event—some lady who is passing through Guérande by the land road to le Croisic, or a few old invalids on their way to take sea-baths, which among the rocks of this peninsula have virtues superior to those of Boulogne, Dieppe, or les Sables. The peasants come on horseback, and for the most part bring in their produce in sacks. They come hither chiefly, as do the salt makers, for the business of purchasing the jewelry peculiar to their caste, which must always be given to Breton maidens on betrothal, and the white linen or the cloth for their clothes. For ten leagues round, Guérande is still that illustrious Guérande where a treaty was signed famous in French history; the key of the coast, displaying no less than le Bourg de Batz, a magnificence now lost in the darkness of ages. The jewelry, the cloth, the linen, the ribbons, and hats are manufactured elsewhere, but to the purchasers they are the specialty of Guérande.

Every artist, nay, and every one who is not an artist, who passes through Guérande, feels a desire—soon forgotten—to end his days in its peace and stillness, walking out in fine weather on the mall that runs round the town from one gate to the other on the seaward side. Now and again a vision of this town comes to knock at the gates of memory; it comes in crowned with towers, belted with walls; it displays its robe strewn with lovely flowers, shakes its mantle of sand-hills, wafts the intoxicating perfumes of its pretty thorn-hedged lanes, decked with posies lightly flung together; it fills your mind, and invites you like some divine woman whom you have once seen in a foreign land, and who has made herself a home in your heart.

Close to the church of Guérande a house may be seen which is to the town what the town is to the country, an exact image

of the past, the symbol of a great thing now gone, a poem. This house belongs to the noblest family in the land—that of du Guaisnic, who, in the time of the du Guesclin, were as superior to them in fortune and antiquity as the Trojans were to the Romans. The Guaisqlain (also formerly spelt du Glaicquin)—which has become Guesclin—are descended from the Guaisnics. The Guaisnics, as old as the granite of Brittany, are neither Franks nor Gauls; they are Bretons, or, to be exact, Celts. Of old they must have been Druids, have cut the mistletoe in sacred groves, and have sacrificed men on dolmens. To-day this race, the equals of the Rohans, but never choosing to be made Princes, powerful in the land before Hugues Capet's ancestors had been heard of, this family, pure from every alloy, is possessed of about two thousand francs a year, this house at Guérande, and the little castle of le Guaisnic. All the estates belonging to the Barony of le Guaisnic, the oldest in Brittany, are in the hands of farmers, and bring in about sixty thousand francs a year in spite of defective culture. The du Guaisnics are indeed still the owners of the land; but as they cannot pay up the capital deposited with them two hundred years ago by those who then held them, they cannot take the income. They are in the position of the French Crown towards its tenants in 1789. When and where could the Barons find the million francs handed over to them by their farmers? Until 1789 the tenure of the fiefs held of the Castle of le Guaisnic, which stands on a hill, was still worth fifty thousand francs; but by a single vote the National Assembly suppressed the fines on leases and sales paid to the feudal lords. In such circumstances, this family, no longer of any consequence in France, would be a subject of ridicule in Paris; at Guérande it is an epitome of Brittany. At Guérande the Baron du Guaisnic is one of the great barons of France, one of the men above whom there is but one—the King of France, chosen of old to be their chief. In these days the name of du Guaisnic—full of local meanings, of which the etymology has been explained in *Les Chouans, or Brittany in 1799*—has undergone the same

change as disfigures that of du Guaisqlain. The tax-collector, like every one else, writes it Guénic.

At the end of a silent, damp, and gloomy alley, formed by the gabled fronts of the neighboring houses, the arch of a door in the wall may be seen, high and wide enough to admit a horseman, which is in itself sufficient evidence of the house having been finished at a time when carriages as yet were not. This arch, raised on jambs, is all of granite. The door, made of oak, has cracked like the bark of the trees that furnished the timber, and is set with enormous nails in a geometrical pattern. The arch is coved, and displays the coat-of-arms of the du Guaisnics, as sharp and clean-cut as though the carver had but just finished it. This shield would delight an amateur of heraldry by its simplicity, testifying to the pride and the antiquity of the family. It is still the same as on the day when the crusaders of the Christian world invented these symbols to know each other by; the Guaisnics have never quartered their bearings with any others. It is always true to itself, like the arms of France, which heralds may recognize borne in chief or quarterly in the coats of the oldest families. This is the blazon, as you still may see it at Guérande: Gules, a hand proper manched ermine holding a sword argent in pale, with this tremendous motto, *Fac.* Is not that a fine and great thing? The wreath of the baronial coronet surmounts this simple shield, on which the vertical lines used, instead of color, to represent *gules,* are still clear and sharp.

The sculptor has given an indescribable look of pride and chivalry to the hand. With what vigor does it hold the sword which has done the family service only yesterday! Indeed, if you should go to Guérande after reading this story, you will not look at that coat-of-arms without a thrill. The most determined Republican cannot fail to be touched by the fidelity, the nobleness, and the dignity buried at the bottom of that narrow street. The du Guaisnics did well yesterday; they are ready to do well to-morrow. *To do* is the great word of chivalry. "You did well in the fight," was always the

praise bestowed by the High Constable *par excellence,* the great du Guesclin, who for a while drove the English out of France. The depth of the carving, protected from the weather by the projecting curved margin of the arch, seems in harmony with the deeply graven moral of the motto in the spirit of this family. To those who know the Guaisnics this peculiarity is very pathetic.

The open door reveals a fairly large courtyard with stables to the right and kitchen offices to the left. The house is built of squared stone from cellar to garret. The front to the courtyard has a double flight of outside steps; the decorated landing at the top is covered with vestiges of sculpture much injured by time; but the eye of the antiquarian can still distinguish in the centrepiece of the principal ornament the hand holding the sword. Below this elegant balcony, graced with mouldings now broken in many places, and polished here and there by long use, is a little lodge, once occupied by a watch-dog. The stone balustrade is disjointed, and weeds, tiny flowers, and mosses sprout in the seams and on the steps, which ages have dislodged without destroying their solidity. The door into the house must have been pretty in its day. So far as the remains allow us to judge, it must have been wrought by an artist trained in the great Venetian school of the thirteenth century; it shows a singular combination of the Mauresque and Byzantine styles, and is crowned by a semicircular bracket, which is overgrown with plants, a posy of rose, yellow, brown, or blue, according to the season. The door, of nail-studded oak, opens into a vast hall, beyond which is a similar door leading to such another balcony, and steps down into the garden.

This hall is in wonderful preservation. The wainscot, up to the height of a man's elbow, is in chestnut wood; the walls above are covered with splendid Spanish leather stamped in relief, its gilding rubbed and rusty. The ceiling is coffered, artistically moulded, painted, and gilt, but the gold is scarcely visible; it is in the same condition as that on the Cordova leather; a few red flowers and green leaves can still be seen.

It seems probable that cleaning would revive the paintings, and show them to be like those which decorate the woodwork of the House at Tours, called *la Maison de Tristan,* which would prove that they had been restored or repaired in the time of Louis XI. The fireplace is enormous, of carved stone, with huge wrought-iron dogs of the finest workmanship. They would carry a cartload of logs. All the seats in this hall are of oak, and have the family shield carved on their backs. Hanging to nails on the wall are three English muskets, fit alike for war or for sport, three cavalry swords, two game-bags, and various tackle for hunting and fishing.

On one side is the dining-room, communicating with the kitchen by a door in a corner turret. This turret corresponds with another in the general design of the front, containing a winding-stair up to the two stories above. The dining-room is hung with tapestries dating from the fourteenth century; the style and spelling of the legends on ribbons below each figure prove their antiquity; but as they are couched in the frank language of the *Fabliaux,* they cannot be transcribed here. These pieces, which are well preserved in the corners where the light has not faded them, are set in frames of carved oak now as black as ebony. The ceiling is supported on beams carved with foliage, and all different; the flats between are of painted wood, wreaths of flowers on a blue ground. Two old dressers with cupboards face each other; and on the shelves, rubbed with Breton perseverance by Mariotte the cook, may be seen now—as at the time when kings were quite as poor in 1200 as the du Guaisnics in 1830—four old goblets, an ancient soup-tureen, and two salt-cellars in silver, a quantity of metal plates, a number of blue and gray stoneware jugs with arabesque designs and the du Guaisnic arms, and crowned with hinged metal lids.

The fireplace has been modernized; its state shows that since the last century this has been the family sitting-room. It is of carved stone in the Louis XV. style, surmounted by a mirror framed in a beaded and gilt moulding. This anachronism, to which the family is indifferent, would grieve a poet.

On the shelf, covered with red velvet, there stands in the middle a clock of tortoise-shell, inlaid with brass, flanked by a pair of silver candelabra of strange design. A large table on heavy twisted legs stands in the middle of the room; the chairs are of turned wood, covered with tapestry. A round table with a centre leg and claw carved to represent a vine-stock stands in front of the window to the garden, and on it stands a quaint lamp. This lamp is formed of a globe of common glass, rather smaller than an ostrich's egg, held in a candlestick by a glass knob at the bottom. From an opening at the top comes a flat wick in a sort of brass nozzle; the plait of cotton, curled up like a worm in a phial, is fed with nut oil from the glass vessel. The window looking out on the garden, like that on the courtyard—for they are alike—has stone mullions and hexagon panes set in lead; they are hung with curtains and valances, decorated with heavy tassels of an old-fashioned stuff—red silk shot with yellow, formerly known as brocatelle or damask.

Each floor of the house—there are but two below the attics—consists of only two rooms. The first floor was of old inhabited by the head of the family; the second was given up to the children; guests were lodged in the attic rooms. The servants were housed over the kitchens and stables. The sloping roof, leaded at every angle, has to the front and back alike a noble dormer window with a pointed arch, almost as high as the ridge of the roof, supported on graceful brackets; but the carving of the stone is worn and eaten by the salt vapor of the atmosphere. Above the windows, divided into four by mullions of carved stone, the aristocratic weather-cock still creaks as it veers.

A detail, precious by its originality, and not devoid of merit in the eyes of the archæologist, must not be overlooked. The turret containing the winding stairs finishes the angle of a broad gabled wall in which there is no window. The stairs go down to a small arched door, opening on a sandy plot dividing the house from the outer wall which forms the back of the stables. The turret is repeated at the corner of the

garden front; but instead of being circular, this turret has five angles and a hemispherical dome; also, it is crowned by a little belfry instead of carrying a conical cap like its sister. This is how those elegant architects lent variety to symmetry. On the level of the first floor these turrets are connected by a stone balcony, supported by brackets like prows with human heads. This outside gallery has a balustrade wrought with marvelous elegance and finish. Then from the top of the gable, below which there is a single small loophole, falls an ornamental stone canopy, like those which are seen over the heads of saints in a cathedral porch. Each turret has a pretty little doorway under a pointed arch, opening on to this balcony. Thus did the architects of the thirteenth century turn to account the bare, cold wall which is presented to us in modern times by the end section of a house.

Cannot you see a lady walking on this balcony in the morning, and looking out over Guérande to where the sun sheds a golden light on the sands, and is mirrored in the face of the ocean? Do you not admire this wall with its finial and gable, furnished at its corners with these reed-like turrets—one suddenly rounded off like a swallow's nest, the other displaying its little door and gothic arch decorated with the hand and sword?

The other end of the Hôtel du Guaisnic joins on to the next house.

The harmony of effect so carefully aimed at by the builders of that period is preserved in the front to the courtyard by the turret corresponding to that containing the winding stair or *vyse,* an old word derived from the French *vis.* It serves as a passage from the dining-room to the kitchen, but it ends at the first floor, and is capped by a little cupola on pillars covering a blackened statue of Saint Calixtus.

The garden is sumptuous within its ancient enclosure; it is more than half an acre in extent, and the walls are covered with fruit-trees; the square beds for vegetables are marked out by standards, and kept by a man-servant named Gasselin, who also takes charge of the horses. At the bottom of the

garden is an arbor with a bench under it. In the midst stands a sundial. The paths are graveled.

The garden front has no second turret to correspond with that at the corner of the gable; to make up for this there is a column with a spiral twist from bottom to top, which of old must have borne the standard of the family, for it ends in a large rusty iron socket in which lank weeds are growing. This ornament, harmonizing with the remains of stone-work, shows that the building was designed by a Venetian architect; this elegant standard is like a sign manual left by Venice, and revealing the chivalry and refinement of the thirteenth century. If there could still be any doubt, the character of the details would remove them. The trefoils of the Guaisnic house have four leaves. This variant betrays the Venetian school debased by its trade with the East, since the semi-Mauresque architects, indifferent to Catholic symbolism, gave the trefoil a fourth leaf, while Christian architects remained faithful to the emblem of the Trinity. From this point of view Venetian inventiveness was heretical.

If this house moves you to admiration, you will wonder, perhaps, why the present age never repeats these miracles of art. In our day such fine houses are sold and pulled down, and make way for streets. Nobody knows whether the next generation will keep up the ancestral home, where each one abides as in an inn; whereas formerly men labored, or at least believed that they labored, for an eternal posterity. Hence the beauty of their houses. Faith in themselves worked wonders, as much as faith in God.

With regard to the arrangement and furniture of the upper stories, they can only be imagined from this description of the ground floor, and from the appearance and habits of the family. For the last fifty years the du Guaisnics have never admitted a visitor into any room but these two, which, like the courtyard and the external features of the house, are redolent of the grace, the spirit, and the originality of the noble province of old Brittany.

Without this topography and description of the town,

without this detailed picture of their home, the singular figures of the family dwelling there might have been less well understood. The frame was necessarily placed before the portraits. Every one must feel that mere things have an effect on people. There are buildings whose influence is visible on the persons who live near them. It is difficult to be irreligious under the shadow of a cathedral like that of Bourges. The soul that is constantly reminded of its destiny by imagery finds it less easy to fall short of it. So thought our ancestors, but the opinion is no longer held by a generation which has neither symbols nor distinctions, while its manners change every ten years. Do you not expect to find the Baron du Guaisnic, sword in hand—or all this picture will be false?

In 1836, when this drama opens, in the early days of August, the family consisted still of Monsieur and Madame du Guénic, of Mademoiselle du Guénic, the Baron's elder sister, and of a son aged one-and-twenty, named Gaudebert-Calyste-Louis, in obedience to an old custom in the family. His father's name was Gaudebert-Calyste-Charles. Only the last name was ever changed; Saint-Gaudebert and Saint-Calixtus were always the patrons of the Guénics.

The Baron du Guénic had gone forth from Guérande as soon as la Vendée and Brittany had taken up arms, and he had fought with Charette, with Catelineau, La Rochejaquelein, d'Elbée, Bonchamps, and the Prince de Loudon. Before going, he had sold all his possessions to his elder sister, Mademoiselle Zéphirine du Guénic, a stroke of prudence unique in Revolutionary annals. After the death of all the heroes of the West, the Baron, preserved by some miracle from ending as they did, would not yield to Napoleon. He fought on till 1802, when, having narrowly escaped capture, he came back to Guérande, and from Guérande went to le Croisic, whence he sailed to Ireland—faithful to the traditional hatred of the Bretons for England.

The good people of Guérande pretended not to know that the Baron was alive; during twenty years not a word be-

trayed him. Mademoiselle du Guénic collected the rents, and sent the money to her brother through the hands of fishermen.

In 1813, Monsieur du Guénic came back to Guérande with as little fuss as if he had been spending the summer at Nantes. During his sojourn in Dublin, in spite of his fifty years, the Breton noble had fallen in love with a charming Irish girl, the daughter of one of the oldest and poorest houses of that unhappy country. Miss Fanny O'Brien was at that time one-and-twenty. The Baron du Guénic came to fetch the papers needed for his marriage, went back to be married, and returned ten months later, at the beginning of 1814, with his wife, who gave birth to a son on the very day when Louis XVIII. landed at Calais—which accounts for the name of Louis.

The loyal old man was now seventy-three years old, but the guerilla warfare against the Republic, his sufferings during five sea voyages in open boats, and his life at Dublin, had all told on him; he looked more than a hundred. Hence, never had there been a Guénic whose appearance was in more perfect harmony with the antiquity of the house built at a time when a Court was held at Guérande.

Monsieur du Guénic was a tall old man, upright, shriveled, strongly knit, and lean. His oval face was puckered by a thousand wrinkles, forming arched fringes above the cheek-bones and eyebrows, giving his face some resemblance to those of the old men painted with such a loving brush by Van Ostade, Rembrandt, Miéris, and Gerard Dow—heads that need a magnifying glass to show their finish. His countenance was buried, as it were, under these numerous furrows produced by an open-air life, by the habit of scanning the horizon in the sunshine, at sunrise, and at the fall of day. But the sympathetic observer could still discern the imperishable forms of the human face, which always speak to the soul even when the eye sees no more than a death's head. The firm modeling of the features, the high brow, the sternness of outline, the severe nose, the form of the bones

which wounds alone can alter, expressed disinterested courage, boundless faith, implicit obedience, incorruptible fidelity, unchanging affection. In him the granite of Brittany was made man.

The Baron had no teeth. His lips, once red, but now blue, were supported only by the hardened gums with which he ate the bread his wife took care first to soften by wrapping it in a damp cloth, and they were sunk in his face while preserving a proud and threatening smile. His chin aimed at touching his nose; but the character of that nose—high in the middle—showed his Breton vigor and power of resistance. His complexion, marbled with red that showed through the wrinkles, was that of a full-blooded, high-tempered man, able to endure the fatigues which had often, no doubt, saved him from apoplexy. The head was crowned with hair as white as silver, falling in curls on his shoulders. This face, that seemed partly extinct, still lived by the brightness of a pair of black eyes, sparkling in their dark, sunken sockets, and flashing with the last fires of a generous and loyal soul. The eyebrows and eyelashes were gone. The skin had set, and would not yield; the difficulty of shaving compelled the old man to grow a fan-shaped beard.

What a painter would most have admired in this old lion of Brittany, with his broad shoulders and sinewy breast, was the hands, splendid soldier's hands—hands such as du Guesclin's must have been, broad, firm, and hairy; the hands that had seized the sword never to relinquish it—any more than Joan of Arc's—till the day when the royal standard floated in the Cathedral at Reims; hands that had often streamed with blood from the thorns of the *Bocage*—the thickets of la Vendée—that had pulled the oar in the Marais to steal upon the "blues," or on the open sea to help Georges to land; the hands of a partisan and of a gunner, of a private and of a captain; hands that were now white, though the Bourbons of the elder branch were in exile; but if you looked at them, you could see certain recent marks revealing that the Baron, not so long ago, had joined Madame in la Vendée.

since the truth may now be told. These hands were a living commentary on the noble motto to which no Guénic had ever been false, *"Fac!"*

The forehead attracted attention by the golden tone on the temples, in contrast with the tan of that narrow, hard, set brow to which baldness had given height enough to add majesty to the noble ruin. The whole countenance, somewhat unintellectual it must be owned—and how should it be otherwise?—had, like the other Breton faces grouped about it, a touch of savagery, a stolid calm, like the impassibility of Huron Indians, an indescribable stupidity, due perhaps to the complete reaction that follows on excessive fatigue when the animal alone is left evident. Thought was rare there; it was visibly an effort; its seat was in the heart rather than the head; and its outcome was action rather than an idea. But on studying this fine old man with sustained attention, the mystery could be detected of this practical antagonism to the spirit of the age. His feelings and beliefs were, so to speak, intuitive, and saved him all thought. He had learnt his duties by dint of living. Religion and Institutions thought for him. Hence he and his kindred reserved their powers of mind for action, without frittering them on any of the things they thought useless, though others considered them important. He brought his thought out of his mind as he drew his sword from the scabbard, dazzling with rectitude like the hand in its ermine sleeve on his coat-of-arms. As soon as this secret was understood everything was clear. It explained the depth of the resolutions due to clear, definite, loyal ideas, as immaculate as ermine. It accounted for the sale to his sister before the war, though to him it had meant everything—death, confiscation, exile. The beauty of these two old persons' characters—for the sister lived only in and for her brother—cannot be fully appreciated by the selfish habits which lie at the root of the uncertainty and changefulness of our day. An archangel sent down to read their hearts would not have found in them a single thought bearing the stamp of self. In 1814, when the priest of

Guérande hinted to Baron du Guénic that he should go to Paris to claim his reward, the old sister, though avaricious for the family, exclaimed:

"Shame! Need my brother go begging like a vagrant?"

"It would be supposed that I had served the King from interested motives," said the old man. "Besides, it is his business to remember. And, after all, the poor King has enough to do with all who are harassing him. If he were to give France away piecemeal, he would still be asked for more."

This devoted servant, who cared so loyally for Louis XVIII., received a colonelcy, the Cross of Saint-Louis, and a pension of two thousand francs.

"The King has remembered!" he exclaimed, on receiving his letters patent.

No one undeceived him. The business had been carried through by the Duc de Feltre from the lists of the Army of la Vendée, in which he found the name of du Guénic with a few other Breton names ending in *ic*.

And so, in gratitude to the King, the Baron stood a siege at Guérande in 1815 against the forces of General Travot; he would not surrender the stronghold; and when he was compelled to evacuate, he made his escape into the woods with a party of Chouans, who remained under arms till the second return of the Bourbons. Guérande still preserves the memory of this last siege. If the old Breton trainbands had but joined, the war begun by this heroic resistance would have fired the whole of la Vendée.

It must be confessed that the Baron du Guénic was wholly illiterate—as illiterate as a peasant; he could read, write, and knew a little of arithmetic; he understood the art of war and heraldry; but he had not read three books in his life besides his prayer-book.

His dress, a not unimportant detail, was always the same; it consisted of heavy shoes, thick woolen stockings, velvet breeches of a greenish hue, a cloth waistcoat, and a coat with a high collar, on which hung the Cross of Saint-Louis.

Beautiful peace rested on his countenance, which, for a year

past, frequent slumber, the precursor of death, seemed to be preparing for eternal rest. This constant sleepiness, increasing day by day, did not distress his wife, nor his now blind sister, nor his friends, whose medical knowledge was not great. To them these solemn pauses of a blameless but weary soul were naturally accounted for—the Baron had done his duty. This told all.

In this house the predominant interest centred in the fate of the deposed elder branch. The future of the exiled Bourbons and the Catholic religion, and the influence of the new politics on Brittany, exclusively absorbed the Baron's family. No other interest mingled with these but the affection they all felt for the son of the house, Calyste, the heir and only hope of the great name of du Guénic. The old Vendéen, the old Chouan, had known a sort of renewal of his youth a few years since, to give his son the habit of those athletic exercises that befit a gentleman who may be called upon to fight at any moment. As soon as Calyste reached the age of sixteen, his father had gone out with him in the woods and marshes, teaching him by the pleasures of sport the rudiments of war, preaching by example, resisting fatigue, steadfast in the saddle, sure of his aim, whatever the game might be, ground game or birds, reckless in overcoming obstacles, inciting his son to face danger as though he had ten children to spare.

Then, when the Duchesse de Berry came to France to conquer the kingdom, the father carried off his son to make him act on the family motto. The Baron set out in the night without warning his wife, who might perhaps have displayed her emotion, leading his only child under fire as if it were to a festival, and followed by Gasselin, his only vassal, who rode forth gleefully. The three men of the house were away for six months, without sending any news to the Baroness—who never read the *Quotidienne* without quaking over every line—nor to her old sister-in-law, heroically upright, whose brow never flinched as she listened to the paper. So the three muskets hanging in the hall had seen service recently. The

Baron, in whose opinion this call to arms was unavailing, had left the field before the fight at la Penissière, otherwise the race of Guénic might have become extinct.

When, one night of dreadful weather, the father, son, and serving-man had reached home after taking leave of MADAME, surprising their friends, the Baroness, and old Mademoiselle du Guénic—though she, by a gift bestowed on all blind people, had recognized the steps of three men in the little street—the Baron looked round on the circle of his anxious friends gathered round the little table lighted up by the antique lamp, and merely said, in a quavering voice, while Gasselin hung up the muskets and swords in their place, these words of feudal simplicity:

"Not all the Barons did their duty."

Then he kissed his wife and sister, sat down in his old armchair, and ordered supper for his son, himself, and Gasselin. Gasselin, having screened Calyste with his body, had received a sabre cut on his shoulder; such a small matter, that he was scarcely thanked for it.

Neither the Baron nor his guests uttered a curse or a word of abuse of the conquerors. This taciturnity is a characteristically Breton trait. In forty years no one had ever heard a contemptuous speech from the Baron as to his adversaries. They could but do their business, as he did his duty. Such stern silence is an indication of immutable determination.

This last struggle, the flicker of exhausted powers, had resulted in the weakness under which the Baron was now failing. The second exile of the Bourbons, as miraculously ousted as they had been miraculously restored, plunged him in bitter melancholy.

At about six in the evening, on the day when the scene opens, the Baron, who, according to old custom, had done his dinner by four o'clock, had gone to sleep while listening to the reading of the *Quotidienne*. His head rested against the back of his armchair by the fireside, at the garden end.

The Baroness, sitting on one of the old chairs in front of

the fire, by the side of this gnarled trunk of an ancient tree, was of the type of those adorable women which exist nowhere but in England, Scotland, or Ireland. There only do we find girls kneaded with milk, golden-haired, with curls twined by angels' fingers, for the light of heaven seems to ripple over their tendrils with every air that fans them. Fanny O'Brien was one of those sylphs, strong in tenderness, invincible in misfortune, as sweet as the music of her voice, as pure as the blue of her eyes, elegantly lovely and refined, with the prettiness and the exquisite flesh—satin to the touch and a joy to the eye—that neither pencil nor pen can do justice to. Beautiful still at forty-two, many a man would have been happy to marry her as he looked at the charms of this glorious, richly-toned autumn, full of flower and fruit, and renewed by dews from heaven. The Baroness held the newspaper in a hand soft with dimples, and turned-up fingertips with squarely-cut nails like those of an antique statue. She leaned back in her chair, without awkwardness or affectation, her feet thrust forward to get warm; and she wore a black velvet dress, for the wind had turned cold these last few days. The bodice, fitting tight to the throat, covered shoulders of noble outline and a bosom which had suffered no disfigurement from having nursed an only child. Her hair fell in ringlets on each side of her face, close to her cheeks, in the English fashion; a simple twist on the top of her head was held by a tortoise-shell comb; and the mass, instead of being of a doubtful hue, glittered in the light like threads of brownish gold. She had made a plait of the loose, short hairs that grow low down and are a mark of fine breeding. This tiny tress, lost in the rest of her hair that was combed high on her head, allowed the eye to note with pleasure the flowing line from her neck to her beautiful shoulders. This little detail shows the care she always gave to her toilet. She persisted in charming the old man's eye. What a delightful and touching attention!

When you see a woman lavishing in her home life the care for appearance which other women find for one feeling only,

you may be sure that she is a noble mother, as she is a noble wife, the joy and flower of the household; she understands her duties as a woman, the elegance of her appearance dwells in her soul and her affections, she does good in secret, she knows how to love truly without ulterior motives, she loves her neighbor as she loves God for Himself. And it really seemed as though the Virgin in Paradise, under whose protection she lived, had rewarded her chaste girlhood and saintly womanhood by the side of the noble old man by throwing over her a sort of glory that preserved her from the ravages of time.

Plato would perhaps have honored the fading of her beauty as so much added grace. Her skin, once so white, had acquired those warm and pearly tones that painters delight in. Her forehead, broad and finely moulded, seemed to love the light that played on it with sheeny touches. Her eyes of turquoise-blue gleamed with wonderful softness under light, velvety lashes. The drooping lids and pathetic temples suggested some unspeakable, silent melancholy; below the eyes her cheeks were dead white, faintly veined with blue to the bridge of the nose. The nose, aquiline and thin, had a touch of royal dignity, a reminder of her noble birth. Her lips, pure and delicately cut, were graced by a smile, the natural outcome of inexhaustible good humor. Her teeth were small and white. She had grown a little stout, but her shapely hips and slender waist were not disfigured by it; the autumn of her beauty displayed still some bright flowers forgotten by spring and the warmer glories of summer. Her finely moulded arms, her smooth, lustrous skin had gained a finer texture; the forms had filled out. And her open, serene countenance, with its faint color, the purity of her blue eyes, to which too rude a gaze would have been an offence, expressed unchanging gentleness, the infinite tenderness of the angels.

At the other side of the fireplace, in another armchair, sat the old sister of eighty, in every particular but dress the exact image of her brother; she listened to the paper while knitting stockings, for which sight is not needed. Her eyes

were darkened by cataract, and she obstinately refused to be operated on, in spite of her sister-in-law's entreaties. She alone knew the secret motive of her determination; she ascribed it to lack of courage, but in fact she did not choose that twenty-five louis should be spent on her; there would have been so much less in the house. Nevertheless, she would have liked to see her brother again. These two old people were an admirable foil to the Baroness' beauty. What woman would not have seemed young and handsome between Monsieur du Guénic and his sister?

Mademoiselle Zéphirine, deprived of sight, knew nothing of the changes that her eighty years had wrought in her looks. Her pallid, hollow face, to which the fixity of her white and sightless eyes gave a look of death, while three or four projecting teeth added an almost threatening expression; in which the deep eye-sockets were circled with red lines, and a few manly hairs, long since white, were visible on the chin and lips—this cold, calm face was framed in a little brown cotton hood quilted like a counterpane, edged with a cambric frill, and tied under her chin with ribbons that were never fresh. She wore a short upper skirt of stout cloth over a quilted petticoat, a perfect mattress, within which lurked double louis d'or; and she had pockets sewn to a waistband, which she took off at night and put on in the morning as a garment. Her figure was wrapped in the usual jacket bodice of Breton women, made of cloth like the skirt, and finished with a close pleated frill, of which the washing formed the only subject of difference between her and the Baroness; she insisted on changing it but once a week. Out of the wadded sleeves of this jacket came a pair of withered but sinewy arms, and two ever-busy hands, somewhat red, which made her arms look as white as poplar wood. These fingers, claw-like from the contraction induced by the habit of knitting, were like a stocking-machine in constant motion; the wonder would have been to see them at rest. Now and then Mademoiselle du Guénic would take one of the long knitting needles darned into the bosom of her dress, and push it in

under her hood among her white hairs. A stranger would have laughed to see how calmly she stuck it in again, without any fear of pricking herself. She was as upright as a steeple; her columnar rigidity might be regarded as one of those old women's vanities which prove that pride is a passion indispensable to vitality. She had a bright smile; she too had done her duty.

As soon as Fanny saw that the Baron was asleep, she ceased reading. A sunbeam shot across from window to window, cutting the atmosphere of the old room in two by a band of gold, and casting a glory on the almost blackened furniture. The light caught the carvings of the cornice, fluttered over the cabinets, spread a shining face over the oak table, and gave cheerfulness to this softly sombre room, just as Fanny's voice brought to the old woman's spirit a harmony as luminous and gay as the sunbeam. Ere long the rays of the sun assumed a reddish glow, which by insensible degrees sank to the melancholy hues of dusk. The Baroness fell into serious thought, one of those spells of perfect silence which her old sister-in-law had noticed during a fortnight past, trying to account for them without questioning the Baroness in any way; but she was studying the causes of this absence of mind as only blind people can, who read, as it were, a black book with white letters, while every sound rings through their soul as though it were an oracular echo. The old blind woman, to whom the falling darkness now meant nothing, went on knitting, and the silence was so complete that the tick of her steel knitting needles could be heard.

"You have dropped the paper—but you are not asleep, sister," said the old woman sagaciously.

It was now dark; Mariotte came in to light the lamp, and placed it on a square table in front of the fire; then she fetched her distaff, her hank of flax, and a little stool, and sat down to spin in the window recess on the side towards the courtyard, as she did every evening. Gasselin was still busy in the outbuildings, attending to the Baron's horse and that of Calyste, seeing that all was right in the stables, and

giving the two fine hounds their evening meal. The glad barking of these two creatures was the last sound that roused the echoes lurking in the dark walls of the house.

These two horses and two dogs were the last remains of the splendor of chivalry. An imaginative man, sitting on the outer steps, and abandoning himself to the poetry of the images still living in this dwelling, might have been startled at hearing the dogs and the tramping hoofs of the neighing steeds.

Gasselin was one of the short, sturdy, square-built Breton race, with black hair and tanned faces, silent, slow, as stubborn as mules, but always going on the road marked out for them. He was now two-and-forty, and had lived in the house twenty-five years. Mademoiselle had engaged Gasselin as servant when he was fifteen, on hearing of the Baron's marriage and probable return. This henchman considered himself a member of the family. He had played with Calyste, he loved the horses and dogs, and talked to them and petted them as though they were his own. He wore a short jacket of blue linen with little pockets that flapped over his hips, and a waistcoat and trousers of the same material, in all seasons alike, blue stockings and hobnailed shoes. When the weather was very cold or wet, he added the goatskin with the hair on, worn in his province.

Mariotte, who was also past forty, was as a woman exactly what Gasselin was as a man. Never did a better pair run in harness; the same color, the same figure, the same small, sharp black eyes. It was hard to imagine why Mariotte and Gasselin had never married; but it might have been criminal; they almost seemed like brother and sister. Mariotte had thirty crowns a year in wages, and Gasselin a hundred livres; but not for a thousand francs a year would they have quitted the house of the Guénics. They were both under the jurisdiction of old Mademoiselle, who had been in the habit of managing the house from the time of the war in la Vendée till her brother's return. Hence she had been greatly upset on hearing that her brother was bringing home a mistress of the

house, supposing that she would have to lay down the domestic sceptre in favor of the Baronne du Guénic, whose first subject she would then be.

Mademoiselle Zéphirine had been very agreeably surprised on finding that Miss Fanny O'Brien was born to a lofty position, a girl who detested the minute cares of housekeeping, and who, like all noble souls, would have preferred dry bread from the bakers to any food she had to prepare herself; capable of fulfilling all the duties of motherhood, strong to endure every necessary privation, but without energy for commonplace industry. When the Baron, in the name of his shrinking wife, begged his sister to rule the house, the old maid embraced the Baroness as her sister; she made a daughter of her, she adored her, happy in being allowed to continue her care of governing the house, and keeping it with incredible rigor and most economical habits, which she relaxed only on great occasions, such as her sister-in-law's confinement and feeding, and everything that could affect Calyste, the worshiped son of the house.

Though the two servants were accustomed to this strict rule, and needed no telling; though they took more care of their master's interests than of their own, still Mademoiselle Zéphirine had an eye on everything. Her attention having nothing to divert it, she was the woman to know without going to look, how large the pile of walnuts should be in the loft, and how much corn was left in the stable-bin without plunging her sinewy arm into its depths. She wore a boatswain's whistle attached by a string to her waistband, and called Mariotte by whistling once, and Gasselin by whistling twice. Gasselin's chief happiness consisted in cultivating the garden and raising fine fruit and good vegetables. He had so little to do that but for his gardening he would have been bored to death. When he had groomed the horses in the morning he polished the floors, and cleaned the two ground-floor rooms; he had little to do for his masters. So in the garden you could not have found a weed or a noxious insect. Sometimes Gasselin might be seen standing motionless and

bareheaded in the sunshine, watching for a field-rat or the dreadful larvæ of the cockchafer; then he would rush in with a child's glee to show the master the creature he had spent a week in catching. On fast days it was his delight to go to le Croisic to buy fish, cheaper there than at Guérande.

Never was there a family more united, on better terms, or more inseparable, than this pious and noble household. Masters and servants seemed to have been made for each other. In five-and-twenty years there had never been a trouble or a discord. The only sorrows they had known were the child's little ailments, and the only anxieties had come of the events of 1814, and again of 1830. If the same things were invariably done at the same hours, if the food varied only with the changes of the seasons, this monotony, like that of nature, with its alternation of cloud, rain, and sunshine, was made endurable by the affection that filled every heart, and was all the more helpful and beneficent because it was the outcome of natural laws.

When twilight was ended, Gasselin came into the room and respectfully inquired whether he were wanted.

"After prayers you can go out, or go to bed," said the Baron, rousing himself, "unless Madame or my sister——"

The two ladies nodded agreement. Gasselin, seeing them all rise to kneel on their chairs, fell on his knees. Mariotte knelt on her stool. Old Mademoiselle du Guénic said prayers aloud.

As she finished, a knock was heard at the outer gate. Gasselin went to open it.

"It is Monsieur le Curé, no doubt; he is almost always the first," remarked Mariotte.

And, in fact, they all recognized the footstep of the parish priest on the resonant steps to the balcony entrance. The Curé bowed respectfully to the three, addressing the Baron and the two ladies with the unctuous civility that a priest has at his command. In reply to an absent-minded "Good-evening" from the mistress of the house, he gave her a look of priestly scrutiny.

"Are you uneasy, madame, or unwell?" he asked.

"Thank you, no!" said she.

Monsieur Grimont, a man of about fifty, of middle height, wrapped in his gown, beneath which a pair of thick shoes with silver buckles were visible, showed above his bands a fat face, on the whole fair, but sallow. His hands were plump. His abbot-like countenance had something of the Dutch burgomaster in its calm complexion and the tones of the flesh, and something, too, of the Breton peasant in its straight black hair and sparkling black eyes, which nevertheless were under the control of priestly decorum. His cheerfulness, like that of all people whose conscience is calm and pure, consented to jest. There was nothing anxious or forbidding in his look, as in that of those unhappy priests whose maintenance or power is disputed by their parishioners, and who instead of being, as Napoleon so grandly said, the moral leaders of the people and natural justices of the peace, are regarded as enemies. The most unbelieving of strangers who should see Monsieur Grimont walking through Guérande would have recognized him as the sovereign of the Catholic town; but this sovereign abdicated his spiritual rule before the feudal supremacy of the du Guénic family. In this drawing-room he was as a chaplain in the hall of his liege. In church, as he gave the blessing, his hand always turned first towards the chapel of the House, where their hand and sword and their motto were carved on the keystone of the vaulting.

"I thought that Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël was here," said the Curé, seating himself, as he kissed the Baroness' hand. "She is losing her good habits. Is the fashion for dissipation spreading? For I observe that Monsieur le Chevalier is at les Touches again this evening."

"Say nothing of his visits there before Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël," exclaimed the old lady in an undertone.

"Ah! mademoiselle," Mariotte put in, "how can you keep the whole town from talking?"

"And what do they say?" asked the Baroness.

"All the girls and the old gossips—everybody, in short—is saying that he is in love with Mademoiselle des Touches."

"A young fellow so handsome as Calyste is only following his calling by making himself loved," said the Baron.

"Here is Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël," said Mariotte.

The gravel in the courtyard was, in fact, heard to crunch under this lady's deliberate steps, heralded by a lad bearing a lantern. On seeing this retainer, Mariotte transferred her stool and distaff to the large hall, where she could chat with him by the light of the rosin candle that burned at the cost of the rich and stingy old maid, thus saving her master's.

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël was a slight, thin woman, as yellow as the parchment of an archive, and wrinkled like a lake swept by the wind, with gray eyes, large, prominent teeth, and hands like a man's; she was short, certainly crooked, and perhaps even hump-backed; but no one had ever been curious to study her perfections or imperfections. Dressed in the same style as Mademoiselle du Guénic, she made quite a commotion in a huge mass of petticoats and frills when she tried to find one of the two openings in her gown by which she got at her pockets; the strangest clinking of keys and money was then heard from beneath these skirts. All the iron paraphernalia of a good housewife was to be found on one side, and on the other her silver snuff-box, her thimble, her knitting, and other jangling objects.

Instead of the quilted hood worn by Mademoiselle du Guénic, she had a green bonnet, which she no doubt wore when she went to look at her melons; like them, it had faded from green to yellow, and as for its shape, fashion has lately revived it in Paris under the name of *Bibi*. This bonnet was made under her own eye by her nieces, of green sarcenet purchased at Guérande, on a shape she bought new every five years at Nantes—for she allowed it the life of an administration. Her nieces also made her gowns, cut by an immemorial pattern. The old maid still used the crutch-handled cane which ladies carried at the beginning of the reign of Marie-Antoinette. She was of the first nobility of Brittany. On her shield figured the ermines of the ancient duchy; the illustrious Breton house of Pen-Hoël ended in her and her sister.

This younger sister had married a Kergarouët, who, in spite of the disapprobation of the neighbors, had added the name of Pen-Hoël to his own, and called himself the Vicomte de Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël.

"Heaven has punished him," the old maid would say. "He has only daughters, and the name of Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël will become extinct."

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël enjoyed an income of about seven thousand francs from land. For thirty-six years, since she had come of age, she herself had managed her estates; she rode out to inspect them, and on every point displayed the firmness of will characteristic of deformed persons. Her avarice was the amazement of all for ten leagues round, but viewed with no disapprobation. She kept one woman servant and this lad; all her expenditure, not inclusive of taxes, did not come to more than a thousand francs a year. Hence she was the object of the most flattering attentions from the Kergarouët-Pen-Hoëls, who spent the winter at Nantes, and the summer at their country-house on the banks of the Loire just below Indret. It was known that she intended to leave her fortune and her savings to that one of her nieces whom she might prefer. Every three months one of the four Demoiselles de Kergarouët came to spend a few days with her.

Jacqueline de Pen-Hoël, a great friend of Zéphirine du Guénic's, and brought up in the faith and fear of the Breton dignity of the Guénics, had conceived a plan, since Calyste's birth, of securing her wealth to this youth by getting him to marry one of these nieces, to be bestowed on him by the Vicomtesse de Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël. She proposed to repurchase some of the best land for the Guénics by paying off the farmers' loans. When avarice has an end in view, it ceases to be a vice; it is the instrument of virtue; its stern privations become a constant sacrifice; in short, it has greatness of purpose concealed beneath its meanness. Zéphirine was perhaps in Jacqueline's secret. Perhaps, too, the Baroness, whose whole intelligence was absorbed in love for her son and tender

care for his father, may have guessed something when she saw with what pertinacious perseverance Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël would bring with her, day after day, Charlotte de Kergarouët, her favorite niece, now fifteen. The priest, Monsieur Grimont, was undoubtedly in her confidence; he helped the old lady to invest her money well. But if Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had had three hundred thousand francs in gold—the sum at which her savings were commonly estimated; if she had had ten times more land than she owned, the du Guénics would never have allowed themselves to pay her such attention as might lead the old maid to fancy that they were thinking of her fortune. With an admirable instinct of truly Breton pride, Jacqueline de Pen-Hoël, gladly accepting the supremacy assumed by her old friends Zéphirine and the du Guénics, always expressed herself honored by a visit when the descendant of Irish Kings and Zéphirine condescended to call on her. She went so far as to conceal with care the little extravagance which she winked at every evening by permitting her boy to burn an *oribus* at the du Guénics,—the ginger-bread colored candle which is commonly used in various districts in the West. This rich old maid was indeed aristocracy, pride, and dignity personified.

At the moment when the reader is studying her portrait, an indiscretion on the part of the Curé had betrayed the fact that, on the evening when the old Baron, the young Chevalier, and Gasselin stole away armed with swords and fowling-pieces to join MADAME in la Vendée—to Fanny's extreme terror, and to the great joy of the Bretons—Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had placed in the Baron's hands a sum of ten thousand francs in gold, an immense sacrifice, supplemented by ten thousand francs more, the fruits of a tithe collected by the Curé, which the old partisan was requested to lay at the feet of Henry V.'s mother, in the name of the Pen-Hoëls and of the parish of Guérande.

Meanwhile, she treated Calyste with the airs of a woman who believes she is in her rights; her schemes justified her in keeping an eye on him; not that she was strait-laced in

her ideas as to questions of gallantry—she had all the indulgence of a woman of the old regime; but she had a horror of Revolutionary manners. Calyste, who might have risen in her esteem by intrigues with Breton women, would have fallen immensely if she had taken up what she called the new-fangled ways. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, who would have unearthed a sum of money to pay off a girl he had seduced, would have regarded Calyste as a reckless spendthrift if she had seen him driving a tilbury, or heard him talk of setting out for Paris. And if she had found him reading some impious review or newspaper, it is impossible to imagine what she might have done. To her, new notions meant the rotation of crops, sheer ruin under the guise of improvements and method, lands ultimately mortgaged as a result of experiments. To her, thrift was the real way to make a fortune; good management consisted in filling her outhouses with buckwheat, rye, and hemp, in waiting for prices to rise at the risk of being known to force the market, and in resolutely hoarding her corn-sacks. As it happened, strangely enough, she had often met with good bargains that confirmed her in her principles. She was thought cunning, but she was not really clever; she had only the methodical habits of a Dutch woman, the caution of a cat, the pertinacity of a priest; and this, in a land of routine, was as good as the deepest perspicacity.

"Shall we see Monsieur du Halga this evening?" asked Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, taking off her knitted worsted mittens after exchanging the usual civilities.

"Yes, mademoiselle, I saw him airing his dog in the Mall," replied the Curé.

"Then our *mouche* will be lively this evening," said she. "We were but four last night."

On hearing the word *mouche,* the priest rose, and brought out of a drawer of one of the cabinets a small, round basket of fine willow, some ivory counters as yellow as Turkish tobacco, from twenty years' service, and a pack of cards as greasy as those of the custom-house officers of Saint-Nazaire, who only have a new pack once a fortnight. The Abbé him-

self sorted out the proper number of counters for each player, and put the basket by the lamp in the middle of the table, with childish eagerness and the manner of a man accustomed to fulfil this little task. A loud rap in military style presently echoed through the silent depths of the old house. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's little servant went solemnly to open the gate. Before long, the tall, lean figure of the Chevalier du Halga, formerly flag-captain under Admiral de Kergarouët, was seen, carefully dressed to suit the season, a black object in the dusk that still prevailed outside.

"Come in, Chevalier," cried Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"The altar is prepared!" said the priest.

Du Halga, whose health was poor, wore flannel for the rheumatism, a black silk cap to protect his head against the fog, and a spencer to guard his precious chest from the sudden blasts of wind that refresh the atmosphere of Guérande. He always went about armed with a rattan to drive off dogs when they tried to make inopportune love to his own, which was a lady. This man, as minutely particular as any fine lady, put out by the smallest obstacles, speaking low to spare the voice remaining to him, had been in his day one of the bravest and most capable officers of the King's navy. He had been honored with the confidence of the Bailli de Suffren, and the Comte de Portenduère's friendship. His valor, as captain of Admiral de Kergarouët's flagship, was scored in legible characters on his face, seamed with scars. No one, on looking at him, could have recognized the voice that had roared down the storm, the eye that had swept the horizon, the indomitable courage of a Breton seaman. He did not smoke, he never swore; he was as gentle and quiet as a girl, and devoted himself to his dog Thisbe and her various little whims with the absorption of an old woman. He gave every one a high idea of his departed gallantry. He never spoke of the startling acts which had amazed the Comte d'Estaing.

Though he stooped like a pensioner, and walked as though he feared to tread on eggs at every step, though he complained of a cool breeze, of a scorching sun, of a damp fog,

he displayed fine white teeth set in red gums, which were reassuring as to his health; and, indeed, his complaint must have been an expensive one, for it consisted in eating four meals a day of monastic abundance. His frame, like the Baron's, was large-boned and indestructibly strong, covered with parchment stretched tightly over the bones, like the coat of an Arab horse that shines in the sun over its sinews. His complexion had preserved the tanned hue it had acquired in his voyages to India, but he had brought back no ideas and no reminiscences. He had emigrated; he had lost all his fortune; then he had recovered the Cross of Saint-Louis and a pension of two thousand francs, legitimately earned by his services, and paid out of the fund for naval pensions. The harmless hypochondria that led him to invent a thousand imaginary ailments was easily accounted for by his sufferings during the emigration. He had served in the Russian navy till the day when the Emperor Alexander wanted him to serve against France; he then retired and went to live at Odessa, near the Duc de Richelieu, with whom he came home, and who procured the payment of the pension due to this noble wreck of the old Breton navy.

At the death of Louis XVIII. he came home to Guérande, and was chosen mayor of the town. The Curé, the Chevalier, and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had been for fifteen years in the habit of spending their evenings at the Hôtel du Guénic, whither also came a few persons of good family from the town and immediate neighborhood. It is easy to see that the Guénic family were the leaders of this little Faubourg Saint-Germain of the district, into which no official was admitted who had been appointed to his post by the new Government. For six years past the Curé invariably coughed at the critical words of *Domine, salvum fac regem.* Politics always stuck at that point in Guérande.

Mouche (a sort of loo) is a game played with five cards in each hand and a turn-up. The turned-up card decides the trumps. At every fresh deal each player is at liberty to play

or to retire. If he throws away his hand he loses only his deposit; for as long as no fines have been paid into the pool, each player must contribute to it. Those who play must make a trick, paid for in proportion to the contents of the pool; if there are five sous in the trick, he pays one sou. The player who fails to pay is *looed;* he then owes as much as the pool contains, which increases it for the following deal. The fines due are written down; they are added to the pools one after another in diminishing order, the heaviest before the lesser sums. Those who decline to play show their cards during the play, but they count for nothing. The players may discard and draw from the pack, as at *écarté*, in order of seniority. Each player may change as many cards as he likes, so the eldest and the second hands may use up the pack between them. The turned-up card belongs to the dealer, who is the youngest hand; he has a right to exchange it for any card in his own hand. One terrible card takes all others, and is known as *mistigris;* mistigris is the knave of clubs. This game, though so excessively simple, is not devoid of interest. The covetousness natural to man finds scope in it, as well as some diplomatic finessing and play of expression.

At the Hôtel du Guénic each player purchased twenty counters for five sous, by which the stake amounted to five liards each deal, an important sum in the eyes of these gamblers. With very great luck a player might win fifty sous, more than any one in Guérande spent in a day. And Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël came to this game—of which the simplicity is unsurpassed in the nomenclature of the Academy, unless by that of Beggar my Neighbor—with an eagerness as great as that of a sportsman at a great hunting party. Mademoiselle Zéphirine, who was the Baroness' partner, attached no less importance to the game of *mouche.* To risk a liard for the chance of winning five, deal after deal, constituted a serious financial speculation to the thrifty old woman, and she threw herself into it with as much moral energy as the greediest speculator puts into gambling on the Bourse for the rise and fall of shares.

By a diplomatic convention, dating from September, 1825, after a certain evening when Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had lost thirty-seven sous, the game was ended as soon as any one expressed a wish to that effect after losing ten sous. Politeness would not allow of a player being put to the little discomfort of looking on at the game without taking part in it. But every passion has its jesuitical side. The Chevalier du Halga and the Baron, two old politicians, had found a way of evading the act. When all the players were equally eager to prolong an exciting game, the brave Chevalier, one of those bachelors who are prodigal and rich by the expenses they save, always offered to lend Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël or Mademoiselle Zéphirine ten counters when either of them had lost her five sous, on the understanding that she should repay them if she should win. An old bachelor might allow himself such an act of gallantry to the unmarried ladies. The Baron also would offer the old maids ten counters, under pretence of not stopping the game. The avaricious old women always accepted, not without some pressing, after the usage and custom of old maids. But to allow themselves such a piece of extravagance, the Baron and the Chevalier must first have won, otherwise the offer bore the character of an affront.

This game was in its glory when a young Mademoiselle de Kergarouët was on a visit to her aunt—Kergarouët only, for the family had never succeeded in getting itself called Kergarouët-Pen-Hoël by anybody here, not even by the servants, who had indeed peremptory orders on this point. The aunt spoke of the *mouche* parties at the du Guénics' as a great treat. The girl was enjoined to make herself agreeable—an easy matter enough when she saw the handsome Calyste, on whom the four young ladies all doted. These damsels, brought up in the midst of modern civilization, thought little of five sous, and paid fine after fine. Then fines would be scored up to a total sometimes of five francs, on a scale ranging from two sous and a half up to ten sous. These were evenings of intense excitement to the old blind woman. The

tricks were called *mains* (or hands) at Guérande. The Baroness would press her foot on her sister-in-law's as many times as she had, as she believed, tricks in her hand. The question of play or no play on occasions when the pool was full led to secret struggles in which covetousness contended with alarms. The players would ask each other, "Are you coming in?" with feelings of envy of those who had good enough cards to tempt fate, and spasms of despair when they were forced to retire.

If Charlotte de Kergarouët, who was commonly thought foolhardy, was lucky in her daring when her aunt had won nothing, she was treated with coldness when they got home, and had a little lecture: "She was too decided and forward; a young girl ought not to challenge persons older than herself; she had an overbold manner of seizing the pool, or declaring to play; a young person should show more reserve and modesty in her manners; it was not seemly to laugh at the misfortunes of others," and so forth.

Then perennial jests, repeated a thousand times a year, but always fresh, turned on the carriage of the basket when the pool overfilled it. They must get oxen to draw it, elephants, horses, asses, dogs. And at the end of twenty years no one noticed the staleness of the joke; it always provoked the same smile. It was the same thing with the remarks caused by the annoyance of seeing a pool taken from those who had helped to fill it and got nothing out. The cards were dealt with automatic slowness. They talked in chest-tones. And these respectable and high-born personages were so delightfully mean as to suspect each other's play. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël almost always accused the Curé of cheating when he won a pool.

"But what is so odd," the Curé would say, "is that I never cheat when I am fined."

No one laid down a card without profound meditation, without keen scrutiny, and more or less astute hints, ingenious and searching remarks. The deals were interrupted, you may be sure, by gossip as to what was going on in the town, or

discussions on politics. Frequently the players would pause for a quarter of an hour, their cards held in a fan against their chest, absorbed in talk. Then, if after such an interruption a counter was short in the pool, everybody was certain that his or her counter was not missing; and generally it was the Chevalier who made up the loss, under general accusations of thinking of nothing but the singing in his ears, his headache, or his fads, and of forgetting to put in. As soon as he had paid up a counter, old Zéphirine or the cunning hunchback was seized with remorse; they then fancied that perhaps the fault was theirs; they thought, they doubted; but, after all, the Chevalier could afford the little loss! The Baron often quite forgot what he was about when the misfortunes of the Royal family came under discussion.

Sometimes the game resulted in a way that was invariably a surprise to the players, who each counted on being the winner. After a certain number of rounds each had won back his counters, and went away, the hour being late, without loss or profit, but not without excitement. On these depressing evenings the *mouche* was abused; it had not been interesting; the players accused the game, as negroes beat the reflection of the moon in water when the weather is bad. The evening had been dull; they had toiled so hard for so little.

When, on their first visit, the Vicomte de Kergarouët and his wife spoke of whist and boston as games more interesting than *mouche,* and were encouraged to teach them by the Baroness, who was bored to death by *mouche,* the company lent themselves to the innovation, not without strong protest; but it was impossible to make these games understood; and as soon as the Kergarouëts had left, they were spoken of as overwhelmingly abstruse, as algebraical puzzles, and incredibly difficult. They all preferred their beloved *mouche,* their unpretentious little *mouche.* And *mouche* triumphed over the modern games, as old things constantly triumph over new in Brittany.

While the Curé dealt the cards, the Baroness was asking

the Chevalier du Halga the same questions as she had asked the day before as to his health. The Chevalier made it a point of honor to have some new complaint. Though the questions were always the same, the Captain had a great advantage in his replies. To-day his false ribs had been troubling him. The remarkable thing was that the worthy man never complained of his wounds. Everything serious he was prepared for, he understood it; but fantastic ailments—pains in his head, dogs devouring his inside, bells ringing in his ears, and a thousand other crotchets worried him greatly; he set up as an incurable, with all the more reason that physicians know no remedy for maladies that are non-existent.

"Yesterday, I fancy you had pains in your legs?" said the Curé very seriously.

"They move about," replied du Halga.

"Legs in your false ribs?" asked Mademoiselle Zéphirine.

"And made no halt on the way?" said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël with a smile.

The Chevalier bowed gravely, with a negative shake of the head, not without fun in it, which would have proved to an observer that in his youth the seaman must have been witty, loved, and loving. His fossilized life at Guérande covered perhaps many memories. As he stood planted on his heron legs in the sun, stupidly watching the sea, or his dog sporting on the Mall, perhaps he was alive again in the Earthly Paradise of a past rich in remembrance.

"So the old Duc de Lenoncourt is dead!" said the Baron, recalling the passage in the *Quotidienne* at which his wife had stopped. "Well, well, the first gentleman-in-waiting had not long to wait before following his master. I shall soon go too."

"My dear! my dear!" said his wife, gently patting his lean and bony hand.

"Let him talk, sister," said Zéphirine. "So long as I am above ground, he will not go under ground. He is younger than I am."

A cheerful smile brightened the old woman's face when

the Baron dropped a reflection of this kind, the players and callers would look at each other anxiously, grieved to find the King of Guérande out of spirits. Those who had come to see him would say as they went away, "Monsieur du Guénic is much depressed; have you noticed how much he sleeps?" And next day all Guérande would be talking of it: "The Baron du Guénic is failing." The words began the conversation in every house in the place.

"And is Thisbe well?" asked Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël as soon as the deal was over.

"The poor little beast is like me," said the Chevalier. "Her nerves are out of order; she is always holding up one of her legs as she runs.—Like this."

And in showing how Thisbe ran, by bending his arm as he raised it, the Chevalier allowed his neighbor, Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, to see his cards; she wanted to know whether he had trumps or *mistigris*. This was a first finesse to which he fell a prey.

"Oh!" exclaimed the Baroness, "the tip of Monsieur le Curé's nose has turned pale, he must have mistigris!"

The joy of having mistigris was so great to the Curé, as to all the players, that the poor priest could not disguise it. There is in each human face some spot where every secret emotion of the heart betrays itself; and these good people, accustomed to watch each other, had, after the lapse of years, discovered the weak place in the Curé—when he had mistigris the tip of his nose turned white. Then they all took care not to play.

"You have had visitors to-day?" said the Chevalier to Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"Yes; one of my brother-in-law's cousins. He surprised me by telling me of the intended marriage of Madame la Comtesse de Kergarouët, a demoiselle de Fontaine——"

"A daughter of Grand-Jacques!" exclaimed du Halga, who during his stay in Paris had never left his Admiral's side.

"The Countess inherits everything; she has married a man who was ambassador.—He told me the most extraordinary

things about our neighbor, Mademoiselle des Touches; so extraordinary, that I will not believe them. Calyste could never be so attentive to her; he has surely enough good sense to perceive such monstrosities."

"Monstrosities!" said the Baron, roused by the word.

The Baroness and the priest looked meaningly at each other. The cards were dealt. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had mistigris; she did not want to continue the conversation, but was glad to cover her delight under the general amazement caused by this word.

"It is your turn to lead, Monsieur le Baron," said she, bridling.

"My nephew is not one of those young men who like monstrosities," said Zéphirine, poking her knitting-pin through her hair.

"Mistigris!" cried Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, without answering her friend.

The Curé, who appeared fully informed as to all that concerned Calyste and Mademoiselle des Touches, did not enter the lists.

"What does she do that is so extraordinary, this Mademoiselle des Touches?" asked the Baron.

"She smokes," said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"It is very wholesome," said the Chevalier.

"Her bacon?" asked the Baron.

"Her bacon! She does not save it," retorted the old maid.

"Every one played, and every one is looed; I have the king, queen, and knave of trumps, mistigris, and a king," said the Baroness. "The pool is ours, sister."

This stroke, won without play, overwhelmed Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, who thought no more of Calyste and Mademoiselle des Touches. At nine o'clock no one remained in the room but the Baroness and the Curé. The four old people had gone away and to bed.

The Chevalier, as usual, escorted Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël to her own house in the Market Place, making remarks on the skill of the last player, on their good or ill luck, or on the

ever-new glee with which Mademoiselle Zéphirine's pocket engulfed her winnings, for the old blind woman made no attempt now to disguise the expression of her sentiments in her face. Madame du Guénic's absence of mind was their subject to-night. The Chevalier had observed the charming Irishwoman's inattention to the game. On the doorstep, when her boy had gone upstairs, the old lady replied in confidence to the Chevalier's guesses as to the Baroness' strange manner by these words, big with importance:

"I know the reason; Calyste is done for if he is not soon married. He is in love with Mademoiselle des Touches—an actress!"

"In that case, send for Charlotte."

"My sister shall hear from me to-morrow," said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, bidding him good-night.

From this study of a normal evening, the commotion may be imagined that was produced in the home circles of Guérande by the arrival, the stay, the departure, or even the passing through of a stranger.

When not a sound was audible in the Baron's room or in his sister's, Madame du Guénic turned to the priest, who was pensively playing with the counters.

"I see that you at last share my uneasiness about Calyste," she said.

"Did you notice Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's prim air this evening?" asked he.

"Yes," replied the Baroness.

"She has, I know, the very best intentions towards our dear Calyste; she loves him as if he were her son; and his conduct in la Vendée at his father's side, with MADAME'S praise of his devoted behavior, has added to the affection Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël feels for him. She will endow either of her nieces whom Calyste may marry with all her fortune by deed of gift.

"You have, I know, in Ireland, a far richer match for your beloved boy; but it is well to have two strings to one's bow. In the event of your family not choosing to undertake to settle

anything on Calyste, Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's fortune is not to be despised. You could, no doubt, find your son a wife with seven thousand francs a year, but not the savings of forty years, nor lands managed, tilled, and kept up as Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's are. That wicked woman, Mademoiselle des Touches, has come to spoil everything. We have at last found out something about her."

"Well?" asked the mother.

"Oh, she is a slut, a baggage," exclaimed the Curé. "A woman of doubtful habits, always hanging about the theatres in the company of actors and actresses, squandering her fortune with journalists, painters, musicians—the devil's own, in short! When she writes, she uses a different name in her books, and is better known by that, it is said, than by that of des Touches. A perfect imp, who has never been inside a church since her first communion, excepting to stare at statues or pictures. She has spent her fortune in decorating les Touches in the most improper manner to make it a sort of Mahomet's Paradise, where the houris are not women. There is more good wine drunk there while she is in the place than in all Guérande besides in a year. Last year the Demoiselles Bougniol had for lodgers some men with goats' beards, suspected of being 'blues,' who used to go to her house, and who sang songs that made those virtuous girls blush and weep. That is the woman your son at present adores.

"If that creature were to ask this evening for one of the atrocious books in which atheists nowadays laugh everything to scorn, the young Chevalier would come and saddle his horse with his own hands, to ride off at a gallop to fetch it for her from Nantes. I do not know that Calyste would do so much for the Church. And then, Bretonne as she is, she is not a Royalist. If it were necessary to march out, gun in hand, for the good cause, should Mademoiselle des Touches—or Camille Maupin, for that, I remember, is her name—want to keep Calyste with her, your son would let his old father set out alone."

"No," said the Baroness.

"I should not like to put him to the test, you might feel it too painfully," replied the Curé. All Guérande is in a commotion over the Chevalier's passion for this amphibious creature that is neither man nor woman, who smokes like a trooper, writes like a journalist, and, at this moment, has under her roof the most malignant writer of them all, according to the postmaster—a trimmer who reads all the papers. It is talked of at Nantes. This morning the Kergarouët cousin, who wants to see Charlotte married to a man who has sixty thousand francs a year, came to call on Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, and turned her head with roundabout tales about Mademoiselle des Touches which lasted seven hours.—There is a quarter to ten striking by the church clock, and Calyste is not come in; he is at les Touches—perhaps he will not come back till morning."

The Baroness listened to the Curé, who had unconsciously substituted monologue for dialogue; he was looking at this lamb of his flock, reading her uneasy thoughts in her face. The Baroness was blushing and trembling. When the Abbé Grimont saw tears in the distressed mother's beautiful eyes, he was deeply touched.

"I will see Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël to-morrow, be comforted," said he, in an encouraging tone. "The mischief is, perhaps, not so great as rumor says; I will find out the truth. Besides, Mademoiselle Jacqueline has confidence in me. Again, we have brought up Calyste, and he will not allow himself to be bewitched by the demon; he will do nothing to disturb the peace of his family, or the plans we are making for his future life. Do not weep; all is not lost, madame; one fault is not vice."

"You only tell me the details," said the Baroness. "Was not I the first to perceive the change in Calyste? A mother feels keenly the pain of being second in her son's affections, the grief of not being alone in his heart. That phase of a man's life is one of the woes of motherhood; but though I knew it must come, I did not expect it so soon. And, then, I could have wished that he should have taken into his heart

some beautiful and noble creature, not a mere actress, a posture-maker, a woman who frequents theatres, an authoress accustomed to feign feeling, a bad woman who will deceive him and make him wretched. She has had 'affairs?' "

"With many men," said the Abbé Grimont. "And yet this miscreant was born in Brittany. She is a disgrace to her native soil. On Sunday I will preach a sermon about her."

"By no means!" exclaimed the Baroness. "The marshmen and peasants are capable of attacking les Touches. Calyste is worthy of his name; he is a true Breton; and some evil might come of it if he were there, for he would fight for her as if she were the Blessed Virgin."

"It is striking ten; I will bid you good-night," said the Abbé, lighting the *oribus* of his lantern, of which the clear glass panes and glittering metal-work showed his housekeeper's minute care for all the concerns of the house. "Who could have told me, madame," he went on, "that a young man nursed at your breast, brought up by me in Christian ideas, a fervent Catholic, a boy who lived like a lamb without spot, would plunge into such a foul bog?"

"But is that quite certain?" said the mother. "And, after all, how could any woman help loving Calyste?"

"No proof is needed beyond that witch's prolonged stay at les Touches. During twenty-four years, since she came of age, this is the longest visit she has paid here. Happily for us, her apparitions have hitherto been brief."

"A woman past forty!" said the Baroness. "I have heard it said in Ireland that such a woman is the most dangerous mistress a young man can have."

"On that point I am ignorant," replied the Curé. "Nay, and I shall die in my ignorance."

"Alas! and so shall I," said the Baroness. "I wish now that I had ever been in love, to be able to study, advise, and comfort Calyste."

The priest did not cross the clean little courtyard alone; Madame du Guénic went with him as far as the gate, in the hope of hearing Calyste's step in Guérande; but she heard

only the heavy sound of the Abbé's deliberate tread, which grew fainter in the distance, and ceased when the shutting of the priest's door echoed through the silent town.

The poor mother went indoors in despair at learning that the whole town was informed of what she had believed herself alone in knowing. She sat down, revived the lamp by cutting the wick with a pair of old scissors, and took up the worsted work she was accustomed to do while waiting for Calyste. She flattered herself that she thus induced her son to come home earlier, to spend less time with Mademoiselle des Touches. But this stratagem of maternal jealousy was in vain. Calyste's visits to les Touches became more and more frequent, and every evening he came in a little later; at last, the previous night, he had not returned till midnight.

The Baroness, sunk in meditation, set her stitches with the energy of women who can think while following some manual occupation. Any one who should have seen her bent to catch the light of the lamp, in the midst of the paneling of this room, four centuries old, must have admired the noble picture. Fanny's flesh had a transparency that seemed to show her thoughts legible on her brow. Stung, now, by the curiosity that comes to pure-minded women, she wondered by what diabolical secrets these daughters of Baal so bewitched a man as to make him forget his mother and his family, his country, his self-interest. Then she went so far as to wish she could see the woman, so as to judge her sanely. She calculated the extent of the mischief that the innovating spirit of the age—which the Curé described as so dangerous to youthful souls—might do to her only child, till now as guileless and pure as an innocent girl, whose beauty could not be fresher than his.

Calyste, a noble offshoot of the oldest Breton and the noblest Irish blood, had been carefully brought up by his mother. Till the moment when the Baroness handed him over to the Curé of Guérande, she was sure that not an indecent word, nor an evil idea, had ever soiled her son's ear or

his understanding. The mother, after rearing him on her own milk, and thus giving him a double infusion of her blood, could present him in virginal innocence to the priest who, out of reverence for the family, undertook to give him a complete and Christian education. Calyste was educated on the plan of the Seminary where the Abbé Grimont had been brought up. His mother taught him English. A mathematical master was discovered, not without difficulty, among the clerks at Saint-Nazaire. Calyste, of course, knew nothing of modern literature, or of the latest advance and progress of science. His education was limited to the geography and emasculated history taught in girls' schools, to the Latin and Greek of the Seminary, to the literature of dead languages, and a limited selection of French writers. When, at sixteen, he began what the Abbé called his course of philosophy, he was still as innocent as at the moment when Fanny had handed him over to the Curé. The Church was no less maternal than the mother; without being bigoted or ridiculous, this well-beloved youth was a fervent Catholic.

The Baroness longed to plan a happy and obscure life for her handsome and immaculate son. She expected some little fortune from an old aunt, about two or three thousand pounds sterling; this sum, added to the present fortune of the Guénics, might enable her to find a wife for Calyste who would bring him twelve or fifteen thousand francs a year. Charlotte de Kergarouët, with her aunt's money, some rich Irish girl, or any other heiress—it was a matter of indifference to the Baroness. She knew nothing of love; like all the people among whom she lived, she regarded marriage as a stepping-stone to fortune. Passion was a thing unknown to these Catholics, old people wholly occupied in saving their souls, in thinking of God, the King, and their own wealth.

No one, therefore, can be surprised at the gravity of the reflections that mingled with the wounded feelings in this mother's heart, living, as she did, as much for her boy's interests as by his affection. If the young couple would but listen to reason, by living parsimoniously and economizing, as

country folk know how, by the second generation the du Guénics might repurchase their estates and reconquer the splendor of wealth. The Baroness hoped to live to be old that she might see the dawn of that life of ease. Mademoiselle du Guénic had understood and adopted this scheme, and now it was threatened by Mademoiselle des Touches.

Madame du Guénic heard midnight strike with horror, and she endured an hour more of fearful alarms, for the stroke of one rang out, and still Calyste had not come home.

"Will he stay there?" she wondered. "It would be the first time—poor child!"

At this moment Calyste's step was heard in the street. The poor mother, in whose heart joy took the place of anxiety, flew from the room to the gate and opened it for her son.

"My dearest mother," cried Calyste, with a look of vexation, "why sit up for me? I have the latch-key and a tinder-box."

"You know, my child, that I can never sleep while you are out," said she, kissing him.

When the Baroness had returned to the room, she looked into her son's face to read in its expression what had happened during the evening; but this look produced in her, as it always did, a certain emotion which custom does not weaken —which all loving mothers feel as they gaze at their human masterpiece, and which for a moment dims their sight.

Calyste had black eyes, full of vigor and sunshine, inherited from his father, with the fine, fair hair, the aquiline nose and lovely mouth, the turned-up finger-tips, the soft complexion, finish, and fairness of his mother. Though he looked not unlike a girl dressed as a man, he was wonderfully strong. His sinews had the elasticity and tension of steel springs, and the singular effect of his black eyes had a charm of its own. As yet he had no hair on his face; this late development, it is said, is a promise of long life. The young Chevalier, who wore a short jacket of black velvet, like his mother's gown, with silver buttons, had a blue neckerchief, neat gaiters, and trousers of gray drill. His snowy-white forehead bore the traces, as it seemed, of great fatigue, but,

in fact, they were those of a burden of sad thoughts. His mother, having no suspicion of the sorrows that were eating the lad's heart out, ascribed this transient change to happiness. Calyste was, nevertheless, as beautiful as a Greek god, handsome without conceit; for, in the first place, he was accustomed to see his mother, and he also cared but little for beauty, which he knew to be useless.

"And those lovely smooth cheeks," thought she, "where the rich young blood flows in a thousand tiny veins, belong to another woman, who is mistress, too, of that girl-like brow? Passion will stamp them with its agitations, and dim those fine eyes, as liquid now as a child's!"

The bitter thought fell heavy on Madame du Guénic's heart, and spoilt her pleasure.

It must seem strange that, in a family where six persons were obliged to live on three thousand francs a year, the son should have a velvet coat, and the mother a velvet dress; but Fanny O'Brien had rich relations and aunts in London, who reminded the Breton Baroness of their existence by sending her presents. Some of her sisters, having married well, took an interest in Calyste so far as to think of finding him a rich wife, knowing that he was as handsome and as well-born as their exiled favorite Fanny.

"You stayed later at les Touches than you did yesterday, my darling?" she said at last, in a broken voice.

"Yes, mother dear," replied he, without adding any explanation.

The brevity of the answer brought a cloud to his mother's brow; she postponed any explanation till the morrow. When mothers are disturbed by such alarms as the Baroness felt at this moment, they almost tremble before their sons; they instinctively feel the effects of the great emancipation of love; they understand all that this new feeling will rob them of; but, at the same time, they are, in a sense, glad of their son's happiness; there is a fierce struggle in their heart. Though the result is that the son is grown up, and on a higher level, true mothers do not like their tacit abdication; they would

rather keep their child little and wanting care. That, perhaps, is the secret of mothers' favoritism for weakly, deformed, and helpless children.

"You are very tired, dear child," said she, swallowing down her tears. "Go to bed."

A mother who does not know everything her son is doing thinks of him as lost when she loves and is as well loved as Fanny. And perhaps any other mother would have quaked in her place as much as Madame du Guénic. The patience of twenty years might be made useless. Calyste—a human masterpiece of noble, prudent, and religious training—might be ruined; the happiness so carefully prepared for him might be destroyed for ever by a woman.

Next day Calyste slept till noon, for his mother would not allow him to be roused; Mariotte gave the spoilt boy his breakfast in bed. The immutable and almost conventual rule that governed the hours of meals yielded to the young gentleman's caprices. Indeed, when at any time it was necessary to obtain Mademoiselle du Guénic's bunch of keys to get out something between meals which would necessitate interminable explanations, the only way of doing it was to plead some whim of Calyste's.

At about one o'clock, the Baron, his wife, and Mademoiselle were sitting in the dining-room; they dined at three. The Baroness had taken up the *Quotidienne,* and was finishing it to her husband, who was always rather more wakeful before his meals. Just as she had done, Madame du Guénic heard her son's step on the floor above, and laid down the paper, saying:

"Calyste, I suppose, is dining at les Touches again to-day; he has just finished dressing."

"He takes his pleasure—that boy!" said the old lady, pulling a silver whistle out of her pocket, and whistling once.

Mariotte came through the turret, making her appearance at the door, which was hidden by a silk damask curtain, like those at the windows.

"Yes," said she, "did you please to want anything?"

"The Chevalier is dining at les Touches; we shall not want the fish."

"Well, we do not know yet," said the Baroness.

"You seem vexed about it, sister; I know by the tone of your voice," said the blind woman.

"Monsieur Grimont has learnt some serious facts about Mademoiselle des Touches, who, during the last year, has done so much to change our dear Calyste."

"In what way?" asked the Baron.

"Well, he reads all sorts of books."

"Ah, ha!" said the Baron; "then that is why he neglects hunting and riding."

"She leads a very reprehensible life, and calls herself by a man's name," Madame du Guénic went on.

"A nickname among comrades," said the old man. "I used to be called *l'Intimé*, the Comte de Fontaine was *Grand-Jacques,* the Marquis de Montauran was *le Gars.* I was a great friend of *Ferdinand's;* he did not submit, any more than I did. Those were good times! There was plenty of fighting, and we had some fun here and there, all the same."

These reminiscences of the war, thus taking the place of paternal anxiety, distressed Fanny for a moment. The Curé's revelations, and her son's want of confidence, had hindered her sleeping.

"And if Monsieur le Chevalier should be in love with Mademoiselle des Touches, where is the harm?" exclaimed Mariotte. "She is a fine woman, and has thirty thousand crowns a year."

"What are you talking about, Mariotte," cried the old man. "A du Guénic to marry a des Touches! The des Touches were not even our squires at a time when the du Guesclins regarded an alliance with us as a distinguished honor."

"A woman who calls herself by a man's name—Camille Maupin!" added the Baroness.

"The Maupins are an old family," said the old man. "They are Norman, and bear *gules, three*———" he stopped short "But she cannot be a man and a woman at the same time."

"She calls herself Maupin at the theatre."

"A des Touches cannot be an actress," said the old man. "If I did not know you, Fanny, I should think you were mad."

"She writes pieces and books," the Baroness went on.

"Writes books!" said the Baron, looking at his wife with as much astonishment as if he had heard of a miracle. "I have heard that Mademoiselle de Scudéri and Madame de Sévigné wrote books, and that was not the best of what they did. But only Louis XIV. and his court could produce such prodigies."

"You will be dining at les Touches, won't you, monsieur?" said Mariotte to Calyste, who came in.

"Probably," said the young man.

Mariotte was not inquisitive, and she was one of the family; she left the room without waiting to hear the question Madame du Guénic was about to put to Calyste.

"You are going to les Touches again, my Calyste?" said she, with an emphasis on *my* Calyste. "And les Touches is not a decent and reputable house. The mistress of it leads a wild life; she will corrupt our boy. Camille Maupin makes him read a great many books—she has had a great many adventures! And you knew it, bad child, and never said anything about it to your old folks."

"The Chevalier is discreet," said his father, "an old world virtue!"

"Too discreet!" said the jealous mother, as she saw the color mount to her son's brow.

"My dear mother," said Calyste, kneeling down before her, "I did not think it necessary to proclaim my defeat. Mademoiselle des Touches, or, if you prefer it, Camille Maupin, rejected my love eighteen months since, when she was here last. She gently made fun of me; she might be my mother, she said; a woman of forty who loved a minor committed a sort of incest, and she was incapable of such depravity. In short, she laughed at me in a hundred ways, and quite overpowered me, for she has the wit of an angel. Then, when she saw me

crying bitter tears, she comforted me by offering me her friendship in the noblest way. She has even more heart than brains; she is as generous as you are. I am like a child to her now.—Then, when she came here again, I heard that she loved another man, and I resigned myself.—Do not repeat all the calumnies you hear about her; Camille is an artist; she has genius, and leads one of those exceptional lives which cannot be judged by ordinary standards."

"My child!" said the pious Fanny, "nothing can excuse a woman for not living according to the ordinances of the Church. She fails in her duties towards God and towards society by failing in the gentle religion of her sex. A woman commits a sin even by going to a theatre; but when she writes impieties to be repeated by actors, and flies about the world, sometimes with an enemy of the Pope's, sometimes with a musician—Oh! Calyste! you will find it hard to convince me that such things are acts of faith, hope, or charity. Her fortune was given her by God to do good. What use does she make of it?"

Calyste suddenly stood up; he looked at his mother and said:

"Mother, Camille is my friend. I cannot hear her spoken of in this way, for I would give my life for her."

"Your life?" said the Baroness, gazing at her son in terror. "Your life is our life—the life of us all!"

"My handsome nephew has made use of many words that I do not understand," said the old blind woman, turning to Calyste.

"Where has he learnt them?" added his mother. "At les Touches."

"Why, my dear mother, she found me as ignorant as a carp."

"You knew all that was essential in knowing the duties enjoined on us by religion," replied the Baroness. "Ah! that woman will undermine your noble and holy beliefs."

The old aunt rose and solemnly extended her hand towards her brother, who was sleeping.

"Calyste," said she, in a voice that came from her heart, "your father never opened a book, he speaks Breton, he fought in the midst of perils for the King and for God. Educated men had done the mischief, and gentlemen of learning had deserted their country.—Learn if you will."

She sat down again, and began knitting with the vehemence that came of her mental agitation. Calyste was struck by this Phocion-like utterance.

"In short, my dearest, I have a presentiment of some evil hanging over you in that house," said his mother, in a broken voice as her tears fell.

"Who is making Fanny cry?" exclaimed the old man, suddenly wakened by the sound of his wife's voice. He looked round at her, his son, and his sister.

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing, my dear," replied the Baroness.

"Mamma," said Calyste in his mother's ear, "it is impossible that I should explain matters now; but we will talk it over this evening. When you know all, you will bless Mademoiselle des Touches."

"Mothers have no love of cursing," replied the Baroness, "and I should never curse any woman who truly loved my Calyste."

The young man said good-bye to his father, and left the house. The Baron and his wife rose to watch him as he crossed the courtyard, opened the gate, and disappeared. The Baroness did not take up the paper again; she was agitated. In a life so peaceful, so monotonous, this little discussion was as serious as a quarrel in any other family; and the mother's anxiety, though soothed, was not dispelled. Whither would this friendship, which might demand and imperil her boy's life, ultimately lead him? How could she, the Baroness, have reason to bless Mademoiselle des Touches? These two questions were as all-important to her simple soul as the maddest revolution can be to a diplomatist. Camille Maupin was a revolution in the quiet and simple home.

"I am very much afraid that this woman will spoil him for us," said she, taking up the newspaper again.

"My dear Fanny," said the old Baron, with knowing sprightliness, "you are too completely an angel to understand such things. Mademoiselle des Touches is, they say, as black as a crow, as strong as a Turk, and she is forty—our dear boy was sure to be attracted by her. He will tell a few very honorable fibs to conceal his happiness. Let him enjoy the illusions of his first love."

"If it were any other woman——"

"But, dearest Fanny, if the woman was a saint, she would not make your son welcome."

The Baroness went back to the paper.

"I will go to see her," said the old man, "and tell you what I think of her."

The speech has no point but in retrospect. After hearing the history of Camille Maupin, you may imagine the Baron face to face with this famous woman.

The town of Guérande, which for two months past had seen Calyste—its flower and its pride—going every day, morning or evening—sometimes both morning and evening—to les Touches, supposed that Mademoiselle des Touches was passionately in love with the handsome lad, and did her utmost to bewitch him. More than one girl and one young woman wondered what was the witchcraft of an old woman that she had such absolute empire over the angelic youth. And so, as Calyste crossed the High Street to go out by the gate to le Croisic, more than one eye looked anxiously after him.

It now becomes necessary to account for the reports that were current concerning the personage whom Calyste was going to see. These rumors, swelled by Breton gossip, and envenomed by the ignorance of the public, had reached even the Curé. The Tax-Receiver, the Justice of the Peace, the head clerk of the customs at Saint-Nazaire, and other literate persons in the district, had not reassured the Abbé by telling him of the eccentric life led by the woman and artist hidden under the name of Camille Maupin.

She had not yet come to eating little children, to killing

her slaves, like Cleopatra, to throwing men into the river, as the heroine of the *Tour de Nesle* is falsely accused of doing; still, to the Abbé Grimont, this monstrous creature, at once a siren and an atheist, was a most immoral combination of woman and philosopher, and fell short of every social law laid down to control or utilize the weaknesses of the fair sex. Just as Clara Gazul is the feminine pseudonym of a clever man, and George Sand that of a woman of genius, so Camille Maupin was the mask behind which a charming girl long hid herself—a Bretonne named Félicité des Touches, she who was now giving the Baronne du Guénic and the worthy Curé of Guérande so much cause for anxiety. This family has no connection with that of the des Touches of Touraine, to which the Regent's ambassador belongs, a man more famous now for his literary talents than for his diplomacy.

Camille Maupin, one of the few famous women of the nineteenth century, was long supposed to be really a man, so manly was her first appearance as an author. Everybody is now familiar with the two volumes of dramas, impossible to put on the stage, written in the manner of Shakespeare or of Lopez de Vega, and brought out in 1822, which caused a sort of literary revolution when the great question of Romanticism *versus* Classicism was a burning one in the papers, at clubs, and at the Académie. Since then Camille Maupin has written several plays and a novel which have not belied the success of her first efforts, now rather too completely forgotten.

An explanation of the chain of circumstances by which a girl assumed a masculine incarnation—by which Félicité des Touches made herself a man and a writer—of how, more fortunate than Madame de Staël, she remained free, and so was more readily excused for her celebrity—will, no doubt, satisfy much curiosity, and justify the existence of one of those monstrosities which stand up among mankind like monuments, their fame being favored by their rarity—for in twenty centuries scarcely twenty great women are to be counted. Hence, though she here plays but a secondary part, as she had great influence over Calyste, and is a figure in the

literary history of the time, no one will be sorry if we pause to study her for a rather longer time than modern fiction usually allows.

In 1793, Mademoiselle Félicité des Touches found herself an orphan. Thus her estates escaped the confiscation which no doubt would have fallen on her father or brother. Her father died on the 10th of August, killed on the palace steps among the defenders of the King, on whom he was in waiting as major of the bodyguard. Her brother, a young member of the corps, was massacred at les Carmes. Mademoiselle des Touches was but two years old when her mother died of grief a few days after this second blow. On her deathbed Madame des Touches placed her little girl in the care of her sister, a nun at Chelles. This nun, Madame de Faucombe, very prudently took the child to Faucombe, an estate of some extent near Nantes, belonging to Madame des Touches, where she settled with three Sisters from the convent. During the last days of the Terror, the mob of Nantes demolished the château and seized the Sisters and Mademoiselle des Touches, who were thrown into prison under a false charge of having harbored emissaries from Pitt and from Coburg. The ninth Thermidor saved them. Félicité's aunt died of the fright; two of the Sisters fled from France, the third handed the little girl over to her nearest relation, Monsieur de Faucombe, her mother's uncle, who lived at Nantes, and then joined her companions in exile.

Monsieur de Faucombe, a man of sixty, had married a young wife, to whom he left the management of his affairs. He busied himself only with archæology, a passion, or, to be accurate, a mania, which helps old men to think themselves alive. His ward's education was left entirely to chance. Félicité, little cared-for by a young woman who threw herself into all the pleasures of the Emperor's reign, brought herself up like a boy. She sat with Monsieur de Faucombe in his library, and read whatever he might happen to be reading Thus she knew life well in theory, and preserved no innocence of mind though virginal at heart. Her intelligence

wandered through all the impurities of science while her heart remained pure. Her knowledge was something amazing, fed by her passion for reading, and well served by an excellent memory. Thus, at eighteen, she was as learned as the authors of to-day ought to be before trying to write. This prodigious amount of study controlled her passions far better than a convent life, which only inflames a young girl's imagination; this brain, crammed with undigested and unclassified information, governed the heart of a child. Such a depravity of mind, absolutely devoid of any influence on her chastity of person, would have amazed a philosopher or an observer, if any one at Nantes could have suspected the fine qualities of Mademoiselle des Touches.

The result was in inverse proportion to the cause: Félicité had no predisposition towards evil; she conceived of everything by her intelligence, but held aloof from the facts. She delighted old Faucombe, and helped him in his works, writing three books for the worthy gentleman, who believed them to be his own, for his spiritual paternity also was blind. Such severe work, out of harmony with the development of her girlhood, had its natural effect; Félicité fell ill, there was a fever in her blood, her lungs were threatened with inflammation. The doctors ordered her horse-exercise and social amusements. Mademoiselle des Touches became a splendid horsewoman, and had recovered in a few months.

At eighteen she made her appearance in the world, where she produced such a sensation, that at Nantes she was never called anything but the beautiful Mademoiselle des Touches. But the adoration of which she was the object left her insensible, and she had come to this by the influence of one of the sentiments which are imperishable in a woman, however superior she may be. Snubbed by her aunt and cousins, who laughed at her studies and made fun of her distant manners, assuming that she was incapable of being attractive, Félicité aimed at being light and coquettish, in short, a woman. She had expected to find some interchange of ideas, some fascination on a level with her own lofty intelligence; she was dis-

gusted by the commonplaces of ordinary conversation and the nonsense of flirtation; above all, she was provoked by the aristocratic airs of the military, to whom at that time everything gave way.

She had, as a matter of course, neglected the drawing-room arts. When she found herself less considered than the dolls who could play the piano, and make themselves agreeable by singing ballads, she aspired to become a musician. She retired into deep solitude, and set to work to study unremittingly under the guidance of the best master in the town. She was rich, she sent for Steibelt to give her finishing lessons, to the great astonishment of her neighbors. This princely outlay is still remembered at Nantes. The master's stay there cost her twelve thousand francs. She became at last a consummate musician. Later, in Paris, she took lessons in harmony and counterpoint, and composed two operas, which were immensely successful, though the public never knew her secret. These operas were ostensibly the work of Conti, one of the most eminent artists of our day; but this circumstance was connected with the history of her heart, and will be explained presently. The mediocrity of provincial society wearied her so excessively, her imagination was full of such grand ideas, that she withdrew from all the drawing-rooms after reappearing for a time to eclipse all other women by the splendor of her beauty, to enjoy her triumph over the musical performers, and win the devotion of all clever people; still, after proving her power to her two cousins, and driving two lovers to desperation, she came back to her books, to her piano, to the works of Beethoven, and to old Faucombe.

In 1812 she was one-and-twenty; the archæologist accounted to her for his management of her property; and from that time forth she herself controlled her fortune, consisting of fifteen thousand francs a year from les Touches, her father's estate; twelve thousand francs, the income at that time from the lands of Faucombe, which increased by a third when the leases were renewed; besides a capital sum of three hundred thousand francs saved by her guardian. Fé-

licité derived nothing from her country training but an apprehension of money matters and that instinct for wise administration which perhaps restores, in the provinces, the balance against the constant tendency of capital to centre in Paris. She withdrew her three hundred thousand francs from the bank where the archæologist had deposited them, and invested in consols just at the time of the disastrous retreat from Moscow. Thus she had thirty thousand francs a year more. When all her expenses were paid, she had a surplus of fifty thousand francs a year to be invested.

A girl of one-and-twenty, with such a power of will, was a match for a man of thirty. Her intellect had gained immense breadth and habits of criticism, which enabled her to judge sanely of men and things, art and politics. Thenceforward she purposed leaving Nantes; but old Monsieur Faucombe fell ill of the malady that carried him off. She was like a wife to the old man; she nursed him for eighteen months with the devotion of a guardian angel, and closed his eyes at the very time when Napoleon was fighting with Europe over the dead body of France. She therefore postponed her departure for Paris till the end of the war.

As a Royalist she flew to hail the return of the Bourbons to Paris. She was welcomed there by the Grandlieus, with whom she was distantly connected; but then befell the catastrophe of the 20th of March, and everything remained in suspense. She had the opportunity of seeing on the spot this last resurrection of the Empire, of admiring the *Grande Armée* which came out on the Champ de Mars, as in an arena, to salute its Cæsar before dying at Waterloo. Félicité's great and lofty soul was captivated by the magical spectacle. Political agitations and the fairy transformations of the theatrical drama, lasting for three months, and known as the hundred days, absorbed her wholly, and preserved her from any passion, in the midst of an upheaval that broke up the Royalist circle in which she had first come out. The Grandlieus followed the Bourbons to Ghent, leaving their house at Mademoiselle des Touches' service.

Félicité, who could not accept a dependent position, bought for the sum of a hundred and thirty thousand francs one of the handsomest mansions in the Rue du Mont-Blanc, where she settled on the return of the Bourbons in 1815; the garden alone is worth two million francs now. Being accustomed to act on her own responsibility, Félicité soon took the habit of independent action, which seems the privilege of men only. In 1816 she was five-and-twenty. She knew nothing of marriage; she conceived of it only in her brain, judged of it by its causes instead of observing its effect, and saw only its disadvantages. Her superior mind rebelled against the abdication which begins the life of a married woman; she keenly felt the preciousness of independence, and had nothing but disgust for the cares of motherhood. These details are necessary to justify the anomalies that characterize Camille Maupin. She never knew father or mother, she was her own mistress from her childhood, her guardian was an old antiquary, chance placed her in the domain of science and imagination, in the literary world, instead of keeping her within the circle drawn by the futile education given to women—a mother's lectures on dress, on the hypocritical proprieties, and man-hunting graces of her sex. And so, long before she became famous, it could be seen at a glance that she had never played the doll.

Towards the end of the year 1817, Félicité des Touches perceived that her face showed symptoms not indeed of fading, but of the beginning of fatigue. She understood that her beauty would suffer from the fact of her persistent celibacy; she was bent on remaining beautiful, for at that time she prized her beauty. Knowledge warned her of the doom set by Nature on her creations, which deteriorate as much by misapplication as by ignorance of her laws. The vision of her aunt's emaciated face rose before her and made her shudder. Thus placed between marriage and passion, she determained to remain free; but she no longer scorned the homage that she met with on all hands.

At the date when this story begins, she was almost the same

as she had been in 1817. Eighteen years had passed over her and left her untouched; at the age of forty she might have called herself twenty-five. Thus a picture of her in 1836 will represent her as she was in 1817. Women who know under what conditions of temperament and beauty a woman must live to resist the attacks of time, will understand how and why Félicité des Touches enjoyed such high privileges, as they study a portrait for which the most glowing colors of the palette must be brought into play.

Brittany offers a singular problem in the predominance of brown hair, brown eyes, and a dark complexion, in a country so close to England, where the atmospheric conditions are so nearly similar. Does the question turn on the wider one of race, or on unobserved physical influences? Scientific men will some day perhaps inquire into the cause of this peculiarity, which does not exist in the neighboring province of Normandy. Pending its solution, the strange fact lies before us that fair women are rare among the women of Brittany, who almost always have the brilliant eyes of Southerners; but instead of showing the tall figures and serpentine grace of Italy or Spain, they are usually small, short, with neat, set figures, excepting some women of the upper classes which have been crossed by aristocratic alliances.

Mademoiselle des Touches, a thoroughbred Bretonne, is of medium height, about five feet, though she looks taller. This illusion is produced by the character of her countenance, which gives her dignity. She has the complexion which is characteristic of Italian beauty, pale olive by day, and white under artificial light; you might think it was animated ivory. Light glides over such a skin as over a polished surface, it glistens on it; only strong emotion can bring a faint flush to the middle of each cheek, and it disappears at once. This peculiarity gives her face the placidity of a savage. The face, long rather than oval, resembles that of some beautiful Isis in the bas-reliefs of Egina; it has the purity of a Sphinx's head, polished by desert fires, lovingly touched by the flame of the Egyptian sun. Her hair, black and thick, falls in plaited

loops over her neck, like the headdress with rigid double locks of the statues at Memphis, accentuating very finely the general severity of her features. She has a full, broad forehead, bossy at the temples, bright with its smooth surface on which the light lingers, and moulded like that of a hunting Diana; a powerful, wilful brow, calm and still. The eyebrows, strongly arched, bend over eyes in which the fire sparkles now and again like that of fixed stars. The white of the eye is not bluish, nor veined with red, nor is it pure white; its texture looks horny, still it is warm in tone; the black centre has an orange ring round the edge; it is bronze set in gold—but living gold, animated bronze. The pupil is deep. It is not, as in some eyes, lined, as it were, like a mirror, reflecting the light, and making them look like the eyes of tigers and cats; it has not that terrible fixity of gaze that makes sensitive persons shiver; but this depth has infinitude, just as the brightness of mirror-eyes has finality. The gaze of the observer can sink and lose itself in that soul, which can shrink and retire as rapidly as it can flash forth from those velvet eyes. In a moment of passion, Camille Maupin's eye is superb; the gold of her glance lights up the yellowish white and the whole flashes fire; but when at rest it is dull, the torpor of deep thought often gives it a look of stupidity; and when the light of the soul is absent, the lines of the face also look sad. The lashes are short, but as black and thick-set as the hair of an ermine's tail. The lids are tawny, and netted with fine red veins, giving them at once strength and elegance, two qualities hard to combine in women. All round the eyes there is not the faintest wrinkle or stain. Here again you will think of Egyptian granite mellowed by time. Only the cheek-bones, though softly rounded, are more prominent than in most women, and confirm the impression of strength stamped on the face.

Her nose, narrow and straight, has high-cut nostrils, with enough of passionate dilation to show the rosy gleam of their delicate lining; this nose is well set on to the brow, to which it is joined by an exquisite curve, and it is perfectly white

to the very tip—a tip endowed with a sort of proper motion that works wonders whenever Camille is angry, indignant, or rebellious. There especially—as Talma noted—the rage or irony of lofty souls finds expression. Rigid nostrils betray a certain shallowness. The nose of a miser never quivers, it is tightly set like his lips; everything in his face is as close shut as himself.

Camille's mouth, arched at the corners, is brightly red; the lips, full of blood, supply that living, impulsive carmine that gives them such infinite charm, and may reassure the lover who might be alarmed by the grave majesty of the face. The upper lip is thin, the furrow beneath the nose dents it low down, like a brow, which gives peculiar emphasis to her scorn. Camille has no difficulty in expressing anger. This pretty lip meets the broader red edge of a lower lip that is exquisitely kind, full of love, and carved, it might be, by Phidias, as the edge of an opened pomegranate, which it resembles in color. The chin is round and firm, a little heavy, but expressing determination, and finishing well this royal, if not goddess-like, profile. It is necessary to add that below the nose, the lip is faintly shaded by a down that is wholly charming; nature would have blundered if she had not there placed that tender, smoky tinge.

The ear is most delicately formed, a sign of other concealed daintinesses. The bust broad, the bosom small but not flat, the hips slender but graceful. The slope of the back is magnificent, more suggestive of the Bacchus than of the Venus Callipyge. Herein we see a detail that distinguishes almost all famous women from the rest of their sex; they have in this a vague resemblance to men; they have neither the pliancy nor the freedom of line that we see in women destined by nature to be mothers; their gait is unbroken by a gentle sway. This observation is, indeed, two-edged; it has its counterpart in men whose hips have a resemblance to those of women,—men who are cunning, sly, false, and cowardly.

Camille's head, instead of having a hollow at the nape of

the neck, is set on her shoulders with a swelling outline without an inward curve, an unmistakable sign of power; and this neck, in some attitudes, has folds of athletic firmness. The muscles attaching the upper arm, splendidly moulded, are those of a colossal woman. The arm is powerfully modeled, ending in wrists of English slenderness, and pretty delicate hands, plump and full of dimples, finished off with pink nails cut to an almond shape, and well set in the flesh. Her hands are of a whiteness which proclaims that all the body, full, firm, and solid, is of a quite different tone from her face. The cold, steadfast carriage of her head is contradicted by the ready mobility of the lips, their varying expression, and the sensitive nostrils of an artist.

Still, in spite of this exciting promise, not wholly visible to the profane, there is something provoking in the calmness of this countenance. The face is melancholy and serious rather than gracious, stamped with the sadness of constant meditation. Mademoiselle des Touches listens more than she speaks. She is alarming by her silence and that look of deep scrutiny. Nobody among really well-informed persons can ever have seen her without thinking of the real Cleopatra, the little brown woman who so nearly changed the face of the earth; but in Camille the animal is so perfect, so homogeneous, so truly leonine, that a man with anything of the Turk in him regrets the embodiment of so great a mind in such a frame, and wishes it were altogether woman. Every one fears lest he may find there the strange corruption of a diabolical soul. Do not cold analysis and positive ideas throw their light upon the passions in this unwedded soul? In her, does not judgment take the place of feeling? Or, a still more terrible phenomenon, does she not feel and judge both together? Her brain being omnipotent, can she stop where other women stop? Has the intellectual power left the affections weak? Can she be gracious? Can she condescend to the pathetic trifles by which a woman busies, amuses, and interests the man she loves? Does she not crush a sentiment at once if it does not answer to the infinite that

she apprehends and contemplates? Who can fill up the gulfs in her eyes?

We fear lest we should find in her some mysterious element of unsubdued virginity. The strength of a woman ought to be merely symbolical; we are frightened at finding it real. Camille Maupin is in some degree the living image of Schiller's Isis, hidden in the depths of the temple, at whose feet the priests found the dying gladiators who had dared to consult her. Her various "affairs," believed in by the world, and not denied by Camille herself, confirm the doubts suggested by her appearance. But perhaps she enjoys this calumny. The character of her beauty has not been without effect on her reputation; it has helped her, just as her fortune and position have upheld her in the midst of society. If a sculptor should wish to make an admirable statue of Brittany, he might copy Mademoiselle des Touches. Such a sanguine, bilious temperament alone can withstand the action of time. The perennially nourished texture of such a skin, as it were, varnished, is the only weapon given to woman by nature to ward off wrinkles, which in Camille are hindered also by the passivity of her features.

In 1817 this enchanting woman threw open her house to artists, famous authors, learned men, and journalists, the men to whom she was instinctively attracted. She had a drawing-room like that of Baron Gérard, where the aristocracy mingled with distinguished talents and the cream of Parisian womanhood. Mademoiselle des Touches' family connections and her fine fortune, now augmented by that of her aunt the nun, protected her in her undertaking—a difficult one in Paris—of forming a circle. Her independence was one cause of her success. Many ambitious mothers dreamed of getting her to marry a son whose wealth was disproportioned to the splendor of his armorial bearings. Certain peers of France, attracted by her eighty thousand francs a year and tempted by her splendid house and establishment, brought the strictest and most fastidious ladies of their family. The diplomatic world, on the look-out for wit and amusement, came and found pleasure there.

Thus Mademoiselle des Touches, the centre of so many interests, could study the different comedies which all men, even the most distinguished, are led to play by passion, avarice, or ambition. She soon saw the world as it really is, and was so fortunate as not to fall at once into such an absorbing love as engrosses a woman's intellect and faculties, and prevents her wholesome judgment. Generally a woman feels, enjoys, and judges, each in turn; hence three ages, the last coinciding with the sad period of old age. To Félicité the order was reversed. Her youth was shrouded in the snows of science, the chill of thoughtfulness. This transposition also explains the oddity of her life and the character of her talents. She was studying men at the age when most women see but one; she despised what they admire; she detected falsehood in the flatteries they accept as truth; she laughed at what makes them serious.

This contradictory state lasted a long time; it had a disastrous termination; it was her fate to find her first love, new-born and tender in her heart, at an age when women are required by nature to renounce love. Her first *liaison* was kept so secret that no one ever knew of it. Félicité, like all women who believe in the commonsense of their feelings, was led to count on finding a beautiful soul in a beautiful body; she fell in love with a face, and discovered all the foolishness of a lady's man, who thought of her merely as a woman. It took her some time to get over her disgust and this mad connection. Another man guessed her trouble, and consoled her without looking for any return, or at any rate he concealed his purpose. Félicité thought she had found the magnanimity of heart and mind that the dandy had lacked. This man had one of the most original intellects of the day. He himself wrote under a pseudonym, and his first works revealed him as an admirer of Italy. Félicité must needs travel or perpetuate the only form of ignorance in which she remained. This man, a sceptic and a scoffer, took Félicité to study the land of Art. This famous "Anonymous" may be regarded as Camille Maupin's

teacher and creator. He reduced her vast information to order, he added to it a knowledge of the masterpieces of which Italy is full, and gave her that subtle and ingenious tone, epigrammatic and yet deep, which is characteristic of his talent—always a little eccentric in its expression—but modified in Camille Maupin by the delicate feeling and the ingenious turn natural to women; he inoculated her with a taste for the works of English and German literature, and made her learn the two languages while traveling.

At Rome, in 1820, Mademoiselle des Touches found herself deserted for an Italian. But for this disaster she might never have become famous. Napoleon said that Misfortune was midwife to Genius. This event gave Mademoiselle des Touches at once and for ever the scorn of mankind which is her great strength. Félicité was dead and Camille was born.

She returned to Paris in the company of Conti, the great musician, for whom she wrote the libretti of two operas; but she had no illusions left, and became, though the world did not know it, a sort of female Don Juan—without either debts or conquests. Encouraged by success, she published the two volumes of dramas which immediately placed Camille Maupin among the anonymous celebrities. She told the story of her betrayed love in an admirable little romance, one of the masterpieces of the time. This book, a dangerous example, was compared, and on the level, with *Adolphe,* a horrible lament, of which the counterpart was found in Camille's tale. The delicate nature of her literary disguise is not yet fully understood; some refined intelligences still see nothing in it but the magnanimity that subjects a man to criticism and screens a woman from fame by allowing her to remain unknown.

In spite of herself, her reputation grew every day, as much by the influence of her *salon* as for her repartees, the soundness of her judgment, and the solidity of her acquirements. She was regarded as an authority, her witticisms were repeated, she could not abdicate the functions with which

Parisian society invested her. She became a recognized exception. The fashionable world bowed to the talent and the wealth of this strange girl; it acknowledged and sanctioned her independence; women admired her gifts, and men her beauty. Indeed, her conduct was always ruled by social proprieties. Her friendships seemed to be entirely Platonic. There was nothing of the authoress—the female author—about her; as a woman of the world Mademoiselle des Touches is delightful—weak at appropriate moments, indolent, coquettish, devoted to dress, charmed with the trivialities that appeal to women and poets.

She perfectly understood that after Madame de Staël there was no place in this century for a Sappho, and that no Ninon could exist in Paris where there were no grand *Seigneurs,* no voluptuous Court. She is the Ninon of intellect; she adores art and artists; she goes from the poet to the musician, from the sculptor to the prose-writer. She is full of a noble generosity that verges on credulity, so ready is she to pity misfortune and to disdain the fortunate. Since 1830 she has lived in a chosen circle of proved friends, who truly love and esteem each other. She dwells far removed from such turmoil as Madame de Staël's, and not less far from political conflict; and she makes great fun of Camille Maupin as the younger brother of George Sand, of whom she speaks as "Brother Cain," for this new glory has killed her own. Mademoiselle des Touches admires her happier rival with angelic readiness, without any feeling of jealousy or covert envy.

Until the time when this story opens she had led the happiest life conceivable for a woman who is strong enough to take care of herself. She had come to les Touches five or six times between 1817 and 1834. Her first visit had been made just after her first disenchantment, in 1818. Her house at les Touches was uninhabitable; she sent her steward to Guérande, and took his little house at les Touches. As yet she had no suspicion of her coming fame; she was sad, she would see no one; she wanted to contemplate herself, as it

were, after this great catastrophe. She wrote to a lady in Paris, a friend, explaining her intentions and giving instructions for furniture to be sent for les Touches. The things came by ship to Nantes, were transhipped to a smaller boat for le Croisic, and thence were carried, not without difficulty, across the sands to les Touches. She sent for workmen from Paris, and settled herself at les Touches, which she particularly liked. She meant to meditate there on the events of life, as in a little private Chartreuse.

At the beginning of winter she returned to Paris. Then the little town of Guérande was torn by diabolical curiosity; nothing was talked of but the Asiatic luxury of Mademoiselle des Touches. The notary, her agent, gave tickets to admit visitors to les Touches, and people came from Batz, from le Croisic, and from Savenay. This curiosity produced in two years the enormous sum for the gatekeeper and gardener of seventeen francs.

Mademoiselle did not come there again till two years later, on her return from Italy, and arrived by le Croisic. For some time no one knew that she was at Guérande, and with her Conti the composer. Her appearance at intervals did not greatly excite the curiosity of the little town of Guérande. Her steward and the notary at most had been in the secret of Camille Maupin's fame. By this time, however, new ideas had made some little progress at Guérande, and several persons knew of Mademoiselle des Touches' double existence. The postmaster got letters addressed to "Camille Maupin, aux Touches."

At last the veil was rent. In a district so essentially Catholic, old-world, and full of prejudices, the strange life led by this illustrious and unmarried woman could not fail to start the rumors which had frightened the Abbé Grimont; it could never be understood; she seemed an anomaly.

Félicité was not alone at les Touches; she had a guest. This visitor was Claude Vignon, the haughty and contemptuous writer who, though he has never published anything but criticism, has impressed the public and literary circles with

an idea of his superiority. Félicité, who for the last seven years had made this writer welcome, as she had a hundred others—authors, journalists, artists, and people of fashion—who knew his inelastic temperament, his idleness, his utter poverty, his carelessness, and his disgust at things in general, seemed by her behavior to him to wish to marry him. She explained her conduct, incomprehensible to her friends, by her ambition and the horror she felt of growing old; she wanted to place the rest of her life in the hands of a superior man for whom her fortune might be a stepping-stone, and who would uphold her importance in the literary world. So she had carried off Claude Vignon from Paris to les Touches, as an eagle takes a kid in his talons, to study him and take some vehement step; but she was deceiving both Calyste and Claude—she was not thinking of marriage. She was in the most violent throes that can convulse a soul so firm as hers, for she found herself the dupe of her own intellect, and saw her life illuminated too late by the sunshine of love, glowing as it glows in the heart of a girl of twenty.

Now for a picture of Camille's "Chartreuse."

At a few hundred paces from Guérande the *terra firma* of Brittany ends, and the salt marshes and sand-hills begin. A rugged road, to which vehicles are unknown, leads down a ravine to the desert of sands left by the sea as neutral ground between the waters and the land. This desert consists of barren hills, of "pans" of various sizes edged with a ridge of clay, in which the salt is collected, of the creek which divides the mainland from the island of le Croisic. Though in geography le Croisic is a peninsula, as it is attached to Brittany only by the strand between it and the Bourg de Batz, a shifting bottom which it is very difficult to cross, it may be regarded as an island. At an angle where the road from le Croisic to Guérande joins the road on the mainland, stands a country house, enclosed in a large garden remarkable for its wrung and distorted pine-trees—some spreading parasol-like at the top, others stripped of their boughs, and all showing red, scarred trunks where the bark has been torn away.

These trees, martyrs to the storm, growing literally in spite of wind and tide, prepare the mind for the melancholy and strange spectacle of the salt marshes, and the sand-hills looking like solidified waves.

The house, well built of schistose stone and cement held together by courses of granite, has no pretensions to architecture; the eye sees only a bare wall, regularly pierced by the windows; those on the first floor have large panes, on the ground floor small quarries. Above the first floor there are lofts, under an enormously high-pointed roof, with a gable at each end, and two large dormers on each side. Under the angle of each gable a window looks out, like a Cyclops' eye, to the west over the sea, to the east at Guérande. One side of the house faces the Guérande road; the other the waste over which le Croisic is seen, and beyond that the open sea. A little stream escapes through an opening in the garden wall on the side by the road to le Croisic, which it crosses, and is soon lost in the sand, or in the little pool of salt water enclosed by the sand-hills and marsh-land, being left there by the arm of the sea.

A few fathoms of roadway, constructed in this break in the soil, leads to the house. It is entered through a gate; the courtyard is surrounded by unpretentious rural outhouses—a stable, a coach-house, a gardener's cottage with a poultry yard and sheds adjoining, of more use to the gatekeeper than to his mistress. The gray tones of this building harmonize delightfully with the scenery it stands in. The grounds are an oasis in this desert, on the edge of which the traveler has passed a mud-hovel, where custom-house officers keep guard. This house, with no lands, or rather of which the lands lie in the district of Guérande, derives an income of ten thousand francs from the marshes, and from farms scattered about the mainland. This was the fief of les Touches, deprived of its feudal revenues by the Revolution. Les Touches is still a property; the marshmen still speak of the *Château* and they would talk of the *Lord* if the owner were not a woman. When Félicité restored les Touches, she was

too much of an artist to think of altering the desolate-looking exterior which gives this lonely building the appearance of a prison. Only the gate was improved by the addition of two brick piers with an architrave, under which a carriage can drive in. The courtyard was planted.

The arrangement of the ground floor is common to most country houses built a hundred years ago. The dwelling was evidently constructed on the ruins of a little *castel* perched there as a link connecting le Croisic and Batz with Guérande, and lording it over the marshes. A hall had been contrived at the foot of the stairs. The first room is a large wainscoted anteroom where Félicité has a billiard-table; next comes an immense drawing-room with six windows, two of which, at the gable-end, form doors leading to the garden, down ten steps, corresponding in the arrangement of the room with the door into the billiard-room, and that into the dining-room. The kitchen, at the other end, communicates with the dining-room through the pantry. The staircase is between the billiard-room and the kitchen, which formerly had a door into the hall; this Mademoiselle des Touches closed, and opened one to the courtyard.

The loftiness and spaciousness of the rooms enables Camille to treat this ground with noble simplicity. She was careful not to introduce any elaboration of detail. The drawing-room, painted gray, has old mahogany furniture with green silk cushions, white cotton window curtains bordered with green, two consoles, and a round table; in the middle is a carpet with a large pattern in squares; over the huge chimney-place are an immense mirror and a clock representing Apollo's car, between candelabra of the style of the Empire. The billiard-room has gray cotton curtains, bordered with green, and two divans. The dining-room furniture consists of four large mahogany sideboards, a table, twelve mahogany chairs with horse-hair seats, and some magnificent engravings by Audran in mahogany frames. From the middle of the ceiling hangs an elegant lamp such as were usual on the staircases of fine houses, with two lights.

All the ceilings and the beams supporting them are painted to imitate wood. The old staircase, of wood with a heavy balustrade, is carpeted with green from top to bottom.

On the first floor were two sets of rooms divided by the staircase. Camille chose for her own those which look over the marshes, the sand-hills, and the sea, arranging them as a little sitting-room, a bedroom, a dressing-room, and a study. On the other side of the house she contrived two bedrooms, each with a dressing-closet and anteroom. The servants' rooms are above. The two spare rooms had at first only the most necessary furniture. The artistic luxuries for which she had sent to Paris she reserved for her own rooms. In this gloomy and melancholy dwelling, looking out on that gloomy and melancholy landscape, she wanted to have the most fantastic creations of art. Her sitting-room is hung with fine Gobelin tapestry, set in wonderfully carved frames. The windows are draped with heavy antique stuffs, a splendid brocade with a doubly shot ground, gold and red, yellow and green, falling in many bold folds, edged with royal fringes and tassels worthy of the most splendid baldachins of the Church. The room contains a cabinet which her agent found for her, worth seven or eight thousand francs now, a table of carved ebony, a writing bureau brought from Venice, with a hundred drawers, inlaid with arabesques of ivory, and some beautiful Gothic furniture. There are pictures and statuettes, the best that an artist friend could select in the old curiosity shops, where the dealers never suspected in 1818 the price their treasures would afterwards fetch. On her tables stand fine Chinese vases of grotesque designs. The carpet is Persian, smuggled in across the sand-hills.

Her bedroom is in the Louis XV. style and a perfectly exact imitation. Here we have the carved wooden bedstead, painted white, with the arched head and side, and figures of Loves throwing flowers, the lower part stuffed and upholstered in brocaded silk, the crown above decorated with four bunches of feathers; the walls are hung with Indian chintz draped with silk cords and knots. The fireplace is

finished with rustic work, the clock of ormolu, between two large vases of the choicest blue Sèvres mounted in gilt copper; the mirror is framed to match. The Pompadour toilet-table has its lace hangings and its glass; and then there is all the fanciful small furniture, the *duchesses,* the couch, the little formal settee, the easy-chair with a quilted back, the lacquer screen, the curtains of silk to match the chairs, lined with pink satin and draped with thick ropes; the carpet woven at la Savonnerie—in short, all the elegant, rich, sumptuous, and fragile things among which the ladies of the eighteenth century made love.

The study, absolutely modern, in contrast with the gallant suggestiveness of the days of Louis XV., has pretty mahogany furniture. The book-shelves are full; it looks like a boudoir; there is a divan in it. It is crowded with the dainty trifles that women love; books that lock up, boxes for handkerchiefs and gloves; pictured lamp-shades, statuettes, Chinese grotesques, writing-cases, two or three albums, paper-weights, in short, every fashionable toy. The curious visitor notes with uneasy surprise a pair of pistols, a narghilé, a riding whip, a hammock, a pipe, a fowling-piece, a blouse, some tobacco, and a soldier's knapsack—a motley collection characteristic of Félicité.

Every lofty soul on looking round must be struck by the peculiar beauty of the landscape that spreads its breadth beyond the grounds, the last vegetation of the Continent. Those dismal squares of brackish water, divided by little white dykes on which the marshman walks, all in white, to rake out and collect the salt and heap it up; that tract over which salt vapors rise, forbidding birds to fly across, while they at the same time choke every attempt at plant-life; those sands where the eye can find no comfort but in the stiff evergreen leaves of a small plant with rose-colored flowers and in the Carthusian pink; that pool of sea-water, the sand of the dunes, and the view of le Croisic—a miniature town dropped like Venice into the sea; and beyond, the immensity of ocean, tossing a fringe of foam over the granite reefs to

emphasize their wild forms,—this scene elevates while it saddens the spirit, the effect always produced in the end by anything sublime which makes us yearn regretfully for unknown things that the soul apprehends at unattainable heights. Indeed, these wild harmonies have no charm for any but lofty natures and great sorrows. This desert, not unbroken, where the sunbeams are sometimes reflected from the water and the sand, whiten the houses of Batz, and ripple over the roofs of le Croisic with a pitiless dazzling glare, would absorb Camille for days at a time. She rarely turned to the delightful green views, the thickets, and flowery hedges that garland Guérande like a bride, with flowers and posies and veils and festoons. She was suffering dreadful and unknown misery.

As Calyste saw the weather-cocks of the two gables peeping above the furze-bushes of the highroad and the gnarled heads of the fir-trees, the air seemed to him lighter; to him Guérande was a prison, his life was at les Touches. Who cannot understand the attractions it held for a simple-minded lad? His love, like that of Cherubino, which had brought him to the feet of a personage who had been a great idea to him before being a woman, naturally survived her inexplicable rejections. This feeling, which is rather the desire for love than love itself, had no doubt failed to elude the inexorable analysis of Camille Maupin, and hence perhaps her repulses, a nobleness of mind misunderstood by Calyste. And, then, the marvels of modern civilization seemed all the more dazzling here by contrast with Guérande, where the poverty of the Guénics was considered splendor. Here, spread before the ravished eyes of this ignorant youth, who had never seen anything but the yellow broom of Brittany and the heaths of la Vendée, lay the Parisian glories of a new world; just as here he heard an unknown and sonorous language. Calyste here listened to the poetical tones of the finest music, the amazing music of the nineteenth century, in which melody and harmony vie with each other as equal powers, and singing and orchestration have achieved incred-

ible perfection. He here saw the works of the most prodigal painting—that of the French school of to-day, the inheritor of Italy, Spain, and Flanders, in which talent has become so common that our eyes and hearts, weary of so much talent, cry out loudly for a genius. He here read those works of imagination, those astounding creations of modern literature, which produce their fullest effect on a fresh young heart. In short, our grand nineteenth century rose before him in all its magnificence as a whole—its criticism, its struggles for every kind of renovation, its vast experiments, almost all measured by the standard of the giant who nursed its infancy in his flag, and sang it hymns to an accompaniment of the terrible bass of cannon.

Initiated by Félicité into all this grandeur, which perhaps escapes the ken of those who put it on the stage and are its makers, Calyste satisfied at les Touches the love of the marvelous that is so strong at his age, and that guileless admiration, the first love of a growing man, which is so wroth with criticism. It is so natural that flame should fly upwards! He heard the light Parisian banter, the graceful irony which revealed to him what French wit should be, and awoke in him a thousand ideas that had been kept asleep by the mild torpor of home life. To him, Mademoiselle des Touches was the mother of his intelligence, a mother with whom he might be in love without committing a crime. She was so kind to him: a woman is always adorably kind to a man in whom she has inspired a passion, even though she should not seem to share it. At this moment Félicité was giving him music lessons. To him the spacious rooms on the ground floor, looking all the larger by reason of the skilful arrangement of the lawns and shrubs in the little park; the staircase, lined with masterpieces of Italian patience—carved wood, Venetian and Florentine mosaics, bas-reliefs in ivory and marble, curious toys made to the order of the fairies of the Middle Ages; the upper rooms, so cozy, so dainty, so voluptuously artistic, were all infused and living with a light, a spirit, an atmosphere, that were supernatural, in-

definable, and strange. The modern world with its poetry was in strong contrast to the solemn, patriarchal world of Guérande, and the two systems here were face to face. On one hand, the myriad effects of art; on the other, the simplicity of wild Brittany. No one, then, need ask why the poor boy, as weary as his mother was of the subtleties of *mouche,* always felt a qualm as he entered this house, as he rang the bell, as he crossed the yard. It is to be observed that these presentiments cease to agitate men of riper growth, inured to the mishaps of life, whom nothing can surprise, and who are prepared for everything.

As he went in, Calyste heard the sound of the piano; he thought that Camille Maupin was in the drawing-room; but on entering the billiard-room he could no longer hear it. Camille was playing, no doubt, on the little upright piano, brought for her from England by Conti, which stood in the little drawing-room above. As he mounted the stairs, where the thick carpet completely deadened the sound of footsteps, Calyste went more and more slowly. He perceived that this music was something extraordinary. Félicité was playing to herself alone; she was talking to herself. Instead of going in, the young man sat down on a Gothic settle with a green velvet cushion on the landing, beneath the window, which was artistically framed in carved wood stained with walnut juice and varnished.

Nothing could be more mysteriously melancholy than Camille's improvisation; it might have been the cry of a soul wailing a *De profundis* to God from the depths of the grave. The young lover knew it for the prayer of love in despair, the tenderness of resigned grief, the sighing of controlled anguish. Camille was amplifying, varying, and changing the introduction to the *cavatina, "Grâce pour toi, grâce pour moi,"* from the fourth act of *Robert le Diable.* Suddenly she began to sing the *scena* in heartrending tones, and broke off. Calyste went in and saw the reason of this abrupt ending. Poor Camille Maupin, beautiful Félicité, turned to him without affectation, her face bathed in tears, took out her handkerchief to wipe them away, and said simply:

"Good-morning."

She was charming in her morning dress; on her head was one of the red chenille nets at that time in fashion, from which the shining curls of her black hair fell on her neck. A very short pelisse formed a modern Greek tunic, showing below it cambric trousers, with embroidered frills, and the prettiest scarlet and gold Turkish slippers.

"What is the matter?" asked Calyste.

"He has not come back," she replied, standing up at the window, and looking out over the sands, the creek, and the marshes.

This reply accounted for her costume. Camille, it would seem, was expecting Claude Vignon, and she was fretted as a woman who had wasted her pains. A man of thirty would have seen this. Calyste only saw that she was unhappy.

"You are anxious?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, with a melancholy that this boy could not fathom. Calyste was hastily leaving the room.

"Well, where are you going?"

"To find him."

"Dear child!" said she, taking his hand, and drawing him to her with one of those tearful looks which to a young soul is the highest reward. "Are you mad? Where do you think you can find him on this shore?"

"I will find him."

"Your mother will suffer mortal anguish. Besides—stay. Come, I insist upon it," and she made him sit down on the divan. "Do not break your heart about me. These tears that you see are the tears we take pleasure in. There is a faculty in women which men have not: that of abandoning ourselves to our nerves by indulging our feelings to excess. By imagining certain situations, and giving way to the idea, we work ourselves up to tears, sometimes into a serious condition and real illness. A woman's fancies are not the sport of the mind merely, but of the heart.—You have come at the right moment; solitude is bad for me. I am not deluded by the wish he felt to go without me to study le Croisic and its rocks, the Bourg de Batz, and its sands and salt-

marshes. I knew he would spend several days over it instead of one. He wished to leave us two alone; he is jealous, or rather he is acting jealousy. You are young; you are handsome."

"Why did you not tell me sooner? Must I come no more?" asked Calyste, failing to restrain a tear that rolled down his cheek, and touched Félicité deeply.

"You are an angel!" she exclaimed.

Then she lightly sang Mathilde's strain *Restez* out of *William Tell,* to efface all gravity from this grand reply of a princess to her subject.

"He thus hopes," she added, "to make me believe in a greater love for me than he feels. He knows all the regard I feel for him," she went on, looking narrowly at Calyste, "but he is perhaps humiliated to find himself my inferior in this. Possibly, too, he has formed some suspicions of you, and thinks he will take us by surprise.—But, even if he is guilty of nothing worse than of wishing to enjoy the delights of this expedition in the wilds without me, of refusing to let me share his excursions, and the ideas the scenes may arouse in him, of leaving me in mortal alarms,—is not that enough? His great brain has no more love for me than had the musician, the wit, the soldier. Sterne is right: names have a meaning, and mine is the bitterest mockery. I shall die without ever finding in a man such love as I have in my heart, such poetry as I have in my soul."

She sat with her arms hanging limp, her head thrown back on the cushion, her eyes dull with concentrated thought, and fixed on a flower in the carpet. The sufferings of superior minds are mysteriously grand and imposing; they reveal immense expanses of the soul, to which the spectator's fancy adds yet greater breadth. Such souls share in the privilege of royalty, whose affections cling to a nation, and then strike a whole world.

"Why did you——?" began Calyste, who could not finish the sentence. Camille Maupin's beautiful, burning hand was laid on his, and eloquently stopped him.

"Nature has forsworn her laws by granting me five or six years of added youth. I have repelled you out of selfishness. Sooner or later age would have divided us.—I am thirteeen years older than he is, and that is quite enough!"

"You will still be beautiful when you are sixty!" cried Calyste, heroically.

"God grant it!" she replied, with a smile. "But, my dear child, I intend to love him. In spite of his insensibility, his lack of imagination, his cowardly indifference, and the envy that consumes him, I believe that there is greatness under those husks; I hope to galvanize his heart, to save him from himself, to attach him to me. . . . Alas! I have the brain to see clearly while my heart is blind."

She was appallingly clear to herself. She could suffer and analyze her suffering, as Cuvier and Dupuytren could explain to their friends the fatal progress of their diseases and the steady advance of death. Camille Maupin knew passion as these two learned men knew anatomy.

"I came here on purpose to form an opinion about him; he is already bored. He misses Paris, as I told him; he is homesick for something to criticise. Here there is no author to be plucked, no system to be undermined, no poet to be driven to despair; he dares not here rush into some excess in which he could unburden himself of the weight of thought. Alas! my love, perhaps, is not true enough to refresh his brain. In short, I cannot intoxicate him!—To-night you and he must get drunk together; I shall say I am ailing, and stay in my room; I shall know if I am mistaken."

Calyste turned as red as a cherry, red from his chin to his hair, and his ears tingled with the glow.

"Good God!" she exclaimed, "and here am I depraving your maiden innocence without thinking of what I was doing! Forgive me, Calyste. When you love you will know that you would try to set the Seine on fire to give the least pleasure to 'the object of your affections,' as the fortune-tellers say."

She paused.

"There are some proud and logical spirits," she went on, "who at a certain age can exclaim, 'If I could live my life again, I would do everything the same.' Now I—and I do not think myself weak—I say, 'I would be such a woman as your mother.'

"To have a Calyste of my own! What happiness! If I had had the greatest fool on earth for a husband, I should have been a humble and submissive wife. And yet I have not sinned against society; I have only hurt myself. Alas! dear child, a woman can no longer go into society unprotected excepting in what is called a primitive state. The affections that are not in harmony with social or natural laws, the affections which are not binding, in short, evade us. If I am to suffer for suffering's sake, I might as well be useful. What do I care for the children of my Faucombe cousins, who are no longer Faucombes, whom I have not seen for twenty years, and who married merchants only! You are a son who has cost me none of the cares of motherhood; I shall leave you my fortune, and you will be happy, at any rate, so far as that is concerned, by my act, dear jewel of beauty and sweetness, which nothing should ever change or fade!"

As she spoke these words in a deep voice, her eyelids fell, that he should not read her eyes.

"You have never chosen to accept anything from me," said Calyste. "I shall restore your fortune to your heirs."

"Child!" said Camille, in her rich tones, while the tears fell down her cheeks, "can nothing save me from myself?"

"You have a story to tell me, and a letter to——" the generous boy began, to divert her from her distress. But she interrupted him before he could finish his sentence.

"You are right. I must, above all things, keep my word. It was too late yesterday; but we shall have time enough to-day, it would seem," she said, in a half-playful, half-bitter tone. "To fulfil my promise, I will sit where I can look down the road to the cliffs."

Calyste placed a deep Gothic armchair where she could look out in that direction, and opened the window. Camille Maupin, who shared the Oriental tastes of the more illustrious writer of her own sex, took out a magnificent Persian narghileh that an ambassador had given her; she filled it with patchouli leaves, cleaned the mouthpiece, scented the quill before she inserted it—it would serve her but once—put a match to the dried leaves, placed the handsome instrument of pleasure, with its long-necked bowl of blue-and-gold enamel, at no great distance, and then rang for tea.

"If you would like a cigarette?—Ah! I always forget that you do not smoke. Such immaculateness as yours is rare! I feel as though only the fingers of an Eve fresh from the hand of God ought to caress the downy satin of your cheeks."

Calyste reddened and sat down on a stool; he did not observe the deep emotion that made Camille blush.

"The person from whom I yesterday received this letter, and who will perhaps be here to-morrow, is the Marquise de Rochefide," said Félicité. "After getting his eldest daughter married to a Portuguese grandee who has settled in France, old Rochefide, whose family is not as old as yours, wanted to connect his son with the highest nobility, so as to procure for him a peerage he had failed to obtain for himself. The Comtesse de Montcornet told him that in the department of the Orne there was a certain Mademoiselle Béatrix Maximilienne, Rose de Casteran, the youngest daughter of the Marquis de Casteran, who wanted to get his two daughters off his hands without any money, so as to leave his whole fortune to his son, the Comte de Casteran. The Casterans, it would seem, are descended direct from Adam.

"Béatrix, born and brought up in the château of Casteran, at the time of her marriage in 1828, was twenty years of age. She was remarkable for what you provincials call eccentricity, which is simply a superior mind, enthusiasm, a sense of the beautiful, and a fervid feeling for the works of art. Take the word of a poor woman who has trusted her-

self on these slopes, there is nothing more perilous for a woman; if she tries them, she arrives where you see me, and where the Marquise is—in an abyss. Men only have the staff that can be a support on the edge of those precipices, a strength which we lack, or which makes us monsters if we have it.

"Her old grandmother, the dowager Marquise de Casteran, was delighted to see her marry a man whose superior she would certainly be in birth and mind. The Rochefides did everything extremely well, Béatrix could but be satisfied; and in the same way Rochefide had every reason to be pleased with the Casterans, who, as connected with the Verneuils, the d'Esgrignons, and the Troisvilles, obtained the peerage for their son-in-law as one of the last batch made by Charles X., though it was annulled by a decree of the Revolution of July.

"Rochefide is a fool, however; he began by having a son; and as he gave his wife no respite, and almost killed her with his company, she soon had enough of him. The early days of married life are a rock of danger for small minds as for great passions. Rochefide, being a fool, mistook his wife's ignorance for coldness; he regarded Béatrix as a lymphatic creature—she is very fair—and thereupon lulled himself in perfect security, and led a bachelor life, trusting to the Marquise's supposed coldness, her pride, her haughtiness, and the splendor of a style of living which surrounds a woman in Paris with a thousand barriers. When you go there you will understand what I mean. Those who hoped to take advantage of his easy indifference would say to him, 'You are a lucky fellow. You have a heartless wife, whose passions will be in her brain; she is content with shining; her fancies are purely artistic; her jealousy and wishes will be amply satisfied if she can form a *salon* where all the wits and talents meet; she will have debauches of music, orgies of literature.'—And the husband took in all this nonsense with which simpletons are stuffed in Paris.

"At the same time, Rochefide is not a common idiot; he has as much vanity and pride as a clever man, with this

difference, that clever men assume some modesty and become cats; they coax to be coaxed in return; whereas, Rochefide has a fine flourishing conceit, rosy and plump, that admires itself in public, and is always smiling. His vanity rolls in the stable, and feeds noisily from the manger, tugging out the hay. He has faults such as are known only to those who are in a position to judge him intimately, which are noticeable only in the shade and mystery of private life, while in society and to society the man seems charming. Rochefide must have been intolerable the moment he fancied that his hearth and home were threatened; for his is that cunning and squalid jealousy that is brutal when it is roused, cowardly for six months, and murderous the seventh. He thought he deceived his wife, and he feared her—two reasons for tyranny if the day should come when he discerned that his wife was so merciful as to affect indifference to his infidelities.

"I have analyzed his character to explain Béatrix's conduct. The Marquise used to admire me greatly; but there is but one step from admiration to jealousy. I have one of the most remarkable *salons* of Paris; she wished to have one, and tried to win away my circle. I have not the art of keeping those who wish to leave me. She has won such superficial persons as are everybody's friends from vacuity, and whose object is always to go out of a room as soon as they have come in; but she has not had time to make a circle. At that time I supposed that she was consumed with the desire of any kind of celebrity. Nevertheless, she had some greatness of soul, a royal pride, ideas, and a wonderful gift of apprehending and understanding everything. She will talk of metaphysics and of music, of theology and of painting. You will see her as a woman what we saw her as a bride; but she is not without a little conceit; she gives herself too much the air of knowing difficult things—Chinese or Hebrew, of having ideas about hieroglyphics, and of being able to explain the papyrus that wraps a mummy.

"Béatrix is one of those fair women by whom fair Eve

would look like a negress. She is as tall and straight as a taper, and as white as the holy wafer; she has a long, pointed face, and a very variable complexion, to-day as colorless as cambric, to-morrow dull and mottled under the skin with a myriad tiny specks, as though the blood had left dust there in the course of the night. Her forehead is grand, but a little too bold; her eyes, pale aquamarine-tinted, floating in the white cornea under colorless eyebrows and indolent lids. There is often a dark circle round her eyes. Her nose, curved to a quarter of a circle, is pinched at the nostrils and full of refinement, but it is impertinent. She has the Austrian mouth, the upper lip thicker than the lower, which has a scornful droop. Her pale cheeks only flush under some very strong emotion. Her chin is rather fat; mine is not thin; and perhaps I ought not to tell you that women with a fat chin are exacting in love affairs. She has one of the most beautiful figures I ever saw; a back of dazzling whiteness, which used to be very flat, but which now, I am told, has filled out and grown dimpled; but the bust is not so fine as the shoulders, her arms are still thin. However, she has a mien and a freedom of manner which redeem all her defects and throw her beauties into relief. Nature has bestowed on her that air, as of a princess, which can never be acquired, which becomes her, and at once reveals the woman of birth; it is in harmony with the slender hips of exquisite form, with the prettiest foot in the world, and the abundant angel-like hair, resembling waves of light, such as Girodet's brush has so often painted.

"Without being faultlessly beautiful or pretty, when she chooses, she can make an indelible impression. She has only to dress in cherry-colored velvet, with lace frillings, and red roses in her hair, to be divine. If on any pretext Béatrix could dress in the costume of a time when women wore pointed stomachers laced with ribbon, rising, slender and fragile-looking, from the padded fulness of brocade skirts set in thick, deep pleats; when their heads were framed in starched ruffs, and their arms hidden under slashed sleeves with lace

ruffles, out of which the hand appeared like the pistil from the cup of a flower; when their hair was tossed back in a thousand little curls over a knot held up by a network of jewels, Béatrix would appear as a successful rival to any of the ideal beauties you may see in that array."

Félicité showed Calyste a good copy of Mieris' picture, in which a lady in white satin stands singing with a gentleman of Brabant, while a negro pours old Spanish wine into a glass with a foot, and a housekeeper is arranging some biscuits.

"Fair women," she went on, "have the advantage over us dark women of the most delightful variety; you may be fair in a hundred ways, but there is only one way of being dark. Fair women are more womanly than we are; we dark Frenchwomen are too like men. Well," she added, "do not be falling in love with Béatrix on the strength of the portrait I have given you, exactly like some prince in the *Arabian Nights*. Too late in the day, my dear boy! But be comforted. With her the bones are for the first comer."

She spoke with meaning; the admiration expressed in the youth's face was evidently more for the picture than for the painter whose touch had missed its purpose.

"In spite of her being a blonde," she resumed, "Béatrix has not the delicacy of her coloring; the lines are severe, she is elegant and hard; she has the look of a strictly accurate drawing, and you might fancy she had southern fires in her soul. She is a flaming angel, slowly drying up. Her eyes look thirsty. Her front face is the best; in profile her face looks as if it had been flattened between two doors. You will see if I am wrong.

"This is what led to our being such intimate friends: For three years, from 1828 to 1831, Béatrix, while enjoying the last gaieties of the Restoration, wandering through drawing-rooms, going to court, gracing the fancy-dress balls at the Elysée Bourbon, was judging men, things, and events from the heights of her intellect. Her mind was fully occupied. This first bewilderment at seeing the world kept her

heart dormant, and it remained torpid under the first startling experiences of marriage—a baby—a confinement, and all the business of motherhood, which I cannot bear; I am not a woman so far as that is concerned. To me children are unendurable; they bring a thousand sorrows and incessant anxieties. I must say that I regard it as one of the blessings of modern society of which that hypocrite, Jean-Jacques, deprived us, that we were free to be or not to be mothers. Though I am not the only woman that thinks this, I am the only one to say it.

"During the storm of 1830 and 1831, Béatrix went to her husband's country house, where she was as much bored as a saint in his stall in Paradise. On her return to Paris, the Marquise thought, and perhaps rightly, that the Revolution, which in the eyes of most people was purely political, would be a moral revolution, too. The world to which she belonged had failed to reconstitute itself during the unlooked-for fifteen years of triumph under the Restoration, so it must crumble away under the steady battering ram of the middle class. She had understood Monsieur Lainé's great words, 'Kings are departing.' This opinion, I suspect, was not without its influence on her conduct.

"She sympathized intellectually with the new doctrines which, for three years after that July, swarmed into life like flies in the sunshine, and which turned many women's heads; but, like all the nobility, though she thought the new ideas magnificent, she wished to save the nobility. Finding no opening now for personal superiority, seeing the uppermost class again setting up the speechless opposition it had already shown to Napoleon—which, during the dominion of actions and facts, was the only attitude it could take, whereas, in a time of moral transition, it was equivalent to retiring from the contest—she preferred a happy life to this mute antagonism.

"When we began to breathe a little, the Marquise met at my house the man with whom I had thought to end my days—Gennaro Conti, the great composer, of Neapolitan

parentage, but born at Marseilles. Conti is a very clever fellow, and has gifts as a composer, though he can never rise to the highest rank. If we had not Meyerbeer and Rossini, he might perhaps have passed for a genius. He has this advantage over them, that he is as a singer what Paganini is on the violin, Liszt on the piano, Taglioni as a dancer—in short, what the famous Garat was, of whom he reminds those who ever heard that singer. It is not a voice, my dear boy, it is a soul. When that singing answers to certain ideas, certain indescribable moods in which a woman sometimes finds herself, if she hears Gennaro, she is lost.—The Marquise fell madly in love with him and won him from me. It was excessively provincial, but fair warfare. She gained my esteem and friendship by her conduct towards me. She fancied I was the woman to fight for my possession; she could not tell that in my eyes the most ridiculous thing in the world under such circumstances is the subject of the contest. She came to see me. The woman, proud as she is, was so much in love that she betrayed her secret and left me mistress of her fate. She was quite charming; in my eyes she remained a woman and a marquise.

"I may tell you, my friend, that women are sometimes bad; but they have a secret greatness which men will never be able to appreciate. And so, as I may wind up my affairs as a woman on the brink of old age, which is awaiting me, I will tell you that I had been faithful to Conti, that I should have continued faithful till death, and that, nevertheless, I knew him thoroughly. He has apparently a delightful nature; at bottom he is detestable. In matters of feeling he is a charlatan.

"There are men, like Nathan, of whom I have spoken to you, who are charlatans on the surface, but honest. Such men lie to themselves. Perched on stilts, they fancy that they are on their feet, and play their tricks with a sort of innocence; their vanity is in their blood; they are born actors, swaggerers, grotesquely funny, like a Chinese jar; they might even laugh at themselves. Their personal im-

pulses are generous, and, like the gaudiness of Murat's royal costume, they attract danger.

"But Conti's rascality will never be known to any one but his mistress. He has as an artist that famous Italian jealousy which led Carlone to assassinate Piola, and cost Paësiello a stiletto thrust. This terrible envy is hidden beneath the most charming good-fellowship. Conti has not the courage of his vice; he smiles at Meyerbeer and pays him compliments, while he longs to rend him. He feels himself weak, and gives himself the airs of force; and his vanity is such that he affects the sentiments furthest from his heart. He assumes to be an artist inspired direct from Heaven. To him Art is something sacred and holy. He is a fanatic; he is sublime in his fooling of fashionable folk; his eloquence seems to flow from the deepest convictions. He is a seer, a demon, a god, an angel. In short, though I have warned you, Calyste, you will be his dupe. This southerner, this seething artist, is as cold as a well-rope.

"You listen to him; the artist is a missionary, Art is a religion that has its priesthood and must have its martyrs. Once started, Gennaro mounts to the most disheveled pathos that ever a German philosopher spouted out on his audience. You admire his convictions—he believes in nothing. He carries you up to Heaven by a song that seems to be some mysterious fluid, flowing with love; he gives you a glance of ecstasy; but he keeps an eye on your admiration; he is asking himself, 'Am I really a god to these people?' And in the same instant he is perhaps saying to himself, 'I have eaten too much macaroni.' You fancy he loves you—he hates you; and you do not know why. But I always knew. He had seen some woman the day before, loved her for a whim, insulted me with false love, with hypocritical kisses, making me pay dearly for his feigned fidelity. In short, he is insatiable for applause; he shams everything, and trifles with everything; he can act joy as well as grief, and he succeeds to perfection. He can please, he is loved, he can get admiration whenever he chooses.

"I left him hating his voice; he owed it more success than he could get from his talent as a composer; and he would rather be a man of genius like Rossini than a performer as fine as Rubini. I had been so foolish as to attach myself to him, and I would have decked the idol till the last. Conti, like many artists, is very dainty, and likes his ease and his little enjoyments; he is dandified, elegant, well dressed; well, I humored all his manias; I loved that weak but astute character. I was envied, and I sometimes smiled with disdain. I respected his courage; he is brave, and bravery, it is said, is the only virtue which no hypocrisy can simulate. On one occasion, when traveling, I saw him put to the test; he was ready to risk his life—and he loves it; but, strange to say, in Paris I have known him guilty of what I call mental cowardice.

"My dear boy, I knew all this. I said to the poor Marquise, 'You do not know what a gulf you are setting foot in; you are the Perseus of a hapless Andromeda; you are rescuing me from the rock. If he loves you, so much the better; but I doubt it; he loves no one but himself.'

"Gennaro was in the seventh heaven of pride. I was no marquise; I was not born a Casteran; I was forgotten in a day. I allowed myself the fierce pleasure of studying this character to its depths. Certain of what the end would be, I meant to watch Conti's contortions. My poor boy, in one week I saw horrors of sentimentality, hideous manœuvring! I will tell you no more; you will see the man here. Only, as he knows that I know him, he hates me now. If he could safely stab me, I should not be alive for two seconds.

"I have never said a word of this to Béatrix. Gennaro's last and constant insult is that he believes me capable of communicating my painful knowledge to the Marquise. He has become restless and absent-minded, for he cannot believe in good feeling in any one. He still performs for my benefit the part of a man grieved to have deserted me. You will find him full of the most penetrating cordiality; he will wheedle, he will be chivalrous. To him every woman is a

Madonna! You have to live with him for some time before you detect the secret of that false frankness, or know the stiletto prick of his humbug. His air of conviction would take in God. And so you will be enmeshed by his feline blandishments, and will never conceive of the deep and rapid arithmetic of his inmost mind.—Let him be.

"I carried indifference to the point of receiving them together at my house. The consequence of this was that the most suspicious world on earth, the world of Paris, knew nothing of the intrigue. Though Gennaro was drunk with pride, he wanted, no doubt, to pose before Béatrix; his dissimulation was consummate. He surprised me; I had expected to find that he insisted on a stage-effect. It was she who compromised herself, after a year of happiness, under all the vicissitudes and risks of Parisian existence.

"She had not seen Gennaro for some days, and I had invited him to dine with me, as she was coming in the evening. Rochefide had no suspicions; but Béatrix knew her husband so well, that, as she often told me, she would have preferred the worst poverty to the wretched life that awaited her in the event of that man ever having a right to scorn or to torment her. I had chosen the evening when our friend, the Comtesse de Montcornet, was at home. After seeing her husband served with his coffee, Béatrix left the drawing-room to dress, though she was not in the habit of getting ready so early.

"'Your hairdresser is not here yet,' said Rochefide, when he heard why she was going.

"'Thérèse can do my hair,' she replied.

"'Why, where are you going? You cannot go to Madame de Montcornet's at eight o'clock.'

"'No,' said she, 'but I shall hear the first act at the Italian Opera.'

"The catechizing bailiff in Voltaire's *Huron* is a silent man by comparison with an idle husband. Béatrix fled, to be no further questioned, and did not hear her husband say, 'Very well; we will go together.'

"He did not do it on purpose; he had no reason to suspect his wife; she was allowed so much liberty! He tried never to fetter her in any way; he prided himself on it. And, indeed, her conduct did not offer the smallest hold for the strictest critic. The Marquis was going who knows where—to see his mistress, perhaps. He had dressed before dinner; he had only to take up his hat and gloves when he heard his wife's carriage draw up under the awning of the steps in the courtyard. He went to her room and found her ready, but amazed at seeing him.

"'Where are you going?' said she.

"'Did I not tell you I would go with you to the Opera?'

"The Marquise controlled the outward expression of intense annoyance; but her cheeks turned as scarlet as though she had used rouge.

"'Well, come then,' she replied.

"Rochefide followed her, without heeding the agitation betrayed by her voice; she was burning with the most violent suppressed rage.

"'To the Opera,' said her husband.

"'No,' cried Béatrix, 'to Mademoiselle des Touches'. I have a word to say to her,' she added, when the door was shut.

"The carriage started.

"'But if you like,' Béatrix added, 'I can take you first to the Opera and go to her afterwards.'

"'No,' said the Marquis; 'if you have only a few words to say to her, I will wait in the carriage; it is only half-past seven.'

"If Béatrix had said to her husband, 'Go to the Opera and leave me alone,' he would have obeyed her quite calmly. Like every clever woman, knowing herself guilty, she was afraid of rousing his suspicions, and resigned herself. Thus, when she gave up the Opera to come to my house, her husband accompanied her. She came in scarlet with rage and impatience. She walked straight up to me, and said in a low voice, with the calmest manner in the world:

"'My dear Félicité, I shall start for Italy to-morrow even-

At the unexpected sight Calyste and Félicité sat silent for a minute

ing with Conti; beg him to make his arrangements, and wait for me here with a carriage and passport.'

"Then she left with her husband.—Violent passions insist on liberty at any cost. Béatrix had for a year been suffering from want of freedom and the rarity of their meetings, for she considered herself one with Gennaro. So nothing could surprise me. In her place, with my temper, I should have acted as she did. Conti's happiness broke my heart; only his vanity was engaged in this matter.

" 'That is, indeed, being loved!' he exclaimed, in the midst of his transports. 'How few women would thus forego their whole life, their fortune, their reputation!'

" 'Oh, yes, she loves you,' said I; 'but you do not love her!'

"He flew into a fury and made a scene; he harangued, he scolded, he described his passion, saying he had never thought it possible that he could love so much. I was immovably cool, and lent him the money he might want for the journey that had taken him by surprise.

"Béatrix wrote a letter to her husband, and set out for Italy the next evening. She stayed there two years; she wrote to me several times. Her letters are bewitchingly friendly; the poor child clings to me as the only woman that understands her. She tells me she adores me. Want of money compelled Gennaro to write an opera; he did not find in Italy the pecuniary resources open to a composer in Paris.—Here is her last letter; you can understand it now if, at your age, you can analyze the emotions of the heart," she added, handing him the letter.

At this moment Claude Vignon came in. At the unexpected sight, Calyste and Félicité sat silent for a minute, she from surprise, he from vague dissatisfaction. Claude's vast, high, and wide forehead, bald at seven-and-thirty, was dark with clouds. His firm, judicious lips expressed cold irony. Claude Vignon is an imposing person, in spite of the changes in a face that was splendid and is now grown livid. From the age of eighteen to five-and-twenty he had a strong like-

ness to the divine young Raphael; but his nose, the human feature which most readily alters, has grown sharp; his countenance has, as it were, sunk under mysterious hollows, the outlines have grown puffy, and with a bad color; leaden grays predominate in the worn complexion, though no one knows what the fatigues can be of a young man, aged, perhaps, by crushing loneliness, and an abuse of keen discernment. He is always examining other men's minds, without object or system; the pickaxe of his criticism is always destroying, and never constructing anything. His weariness is that of the laborer, not of the architect.

His eyes, light blue and once bright, are dimmed with unconfessed suffering, or clouded by sullen sadness. Dissipation has darkened the eyelids beneath the brows; the temples have lost their smoothness. The chin, most nobly moulded, has grown double without dignity. His voice, never very sonorous, has grown thin; it is not hoarse, not husky, but something between the two. The inscrutability of this fine face, the fixity of that gaze, cover an irresolution and weakness that are betrayed in the shrewd and ironical smile. This weakness affects his actions, but not his mind; the stamp of encyclopædic intellect is on that brow and in the habit of that face, at once child-like and lofty.

One detail may help to explain the eccentricities of this character. The man is tall and already somewhat bent, like all who bear a world of ideas. These tall, long frames have never been remarkable for tenacious energy, for creative activity. Charlemagne, Narses, Belisarius, and Constantine have been, in this particular, very noteworthy exceptions. Claude Vignon, no doubt, suggests mysteries to be solved. In the first place, he is at once very simple and very deep. Though he rushes into excess with the readiness of a courtesan, his mind remains unclouded. The intellect which can criticise art, science, literature, and politics is inadequate to control his outer life. Claude contemplates himself in the wide extent of his intellectual realm, and gives up the form of things with Diogenes-like indifference. Content with see-

ing into everything, understanding everything, he scorns material details; but, being beset with hesitancy as soon as creation is needed, he sees obstacles without being carried away by beauties, and by dint of discussing means, he sits, his hands hanging idle, producing no results. Intellectually he is a Turk in whom meditation induces sleep. Criticism is his opium, and his harem of books has disgusted him with any work he might do.

He is equally indifferent to the smallest and to the greatest things, and is compelled by the mere weight of his brain to throw himself into debauchery to abdicate for a little while the irresistible power of his omnipotent analysis. He is too much absorbed by the seamy side of genius, and you may now conceive that Camille Maupin should try to show him the right side.

The task was a fascinating one. Claude Vignon believed himself no less great as a politician than he was as a writer; but this Machiavelli of private life laughs in his sleeve at ambitious persons, he knows all he can ever know, he instinctively measures his future life by his faculties, he sees himself great, he looks obstacles in the face, perceives the folly of parvenus, takes fright, or is disgusted, and lets the time slip by without doing anything. Like Étienne Lousteau, the feuilleton writer; like Nathan, the famous dramatic author; like Blondet, another journalist, he was born in the middle class to which we owe most of our great writers.

"Which way did you come?" said Mademoiselle des Touches, coloring with pleasure or surprise.

"In at the door," replied Claude Vignon, drily.

"Well," she replied, with a shrug, "I know you are not a man to come in at the window."

"Scaling a balcony is a sort of cross of honor for the beloved fair."

"Enough!" said Félicité.

"I am in the way?" said Claude Vignon.

"Monsieur," said the guileless Calyste, "this letter——"

"Keep it; I ask no questions. At our age such things

need no words," said he, in a satirical tone, interrupting Calyste.

"But, indeed, monsieur——" Calyste began, indignantly.

"Be calm, young man; my indulgence for feelings is boundless."

"My dear Calyste," said Camille, anxious to speak.

"Dear?" said Vignon, interrupting her.

"Claude is jesting," Camille went on, addressing Calyste, "and he is wrong—with you who know nothing of Paris and its 'chaff.'"

"I had no idea that I was funny," said Vignon, very gravely.

"By what road did you come? For two hours I have never ceased looking out towards le Croisic."

"You were not incessantly looking," replied Vignon.

"You are intolerable with your banter."

"Banter! I?"

Calyste rose.

"You are not so badly off here that you need leave," said Vignon.

"On the contrary," said the indignant youth, to whom Camille gave her hand, which he kissed instead of merely taking it, and left on it a scalding tear.

"I wish I were that little young man," said the critic, seating himself, and taking the end of the hookah. "How he will love!"

"Too much, for then he will not be loved," said Mademoiselle des Touches. "Madame de Rochefide is coming here."

"Good!" said Claude; "and with Conti?"

"She will stay here alone, but he is bringing her."

"Have they quarreled?"

"No."

"Play me a sonata by Beethoven; I know nothing of the music he has written for the piano."

Claude filled the bowl of the hookah with tobacco, watching Camille more closely than she knew; a hideous idea

possessed him; he fancied that a straightforward woman believed she had duped him. The situation was a new one.

Calyste, as he went away, was thinking neither of Béatrix de Rochefide nor her letter; he was furious with Claude Vignon, full of wrath at what he thought want of delicacy, and of pity for poor Félicité. How could a man be loved by that perfect woman and not worship her on his knees, not trust her on the faith of a look or a smile? After being the privileged spectator of the suffering Félicité had endured while waiting, he felt an impulse to rend that pale, cold spectre. He knew nothing himself, as Félicité had told him, of the sort of deceptive witticisms in which the satirists of the press excel. To him love was a human form of religion.

On seeing him cross the courtyard, his mother could not restrain a joyful exclamation, and old Mademoiselle du Guénic whistled for Mariotte.

"Mariotte, here is the child; give us the *lubine*."

"I saw him, mademoiselle," replied the cook.

His mother, a little distressed by the melancholy that sat on Calyste's brow, never suspecting that it was caused by what he thought Vignon's bad treatment of Félicité, took up her worsted work. The old aunt pulled out her knitting. The Baron gave up his easy-chair to his son, and walked up and down the room as if to unstiffen his legs before taking a turn in the garden. No Flemish or Dutch picture represents an interior of richer tone, or furnished with more happily suitable figures. The handsome youth, dressed in black velvet, the mother, still so handsome, and the two old folks, in the setting of ancient paneling, were the expression of the most domestic harmony.

Fanny longed to question Calyste, but he had taken Béatrix's letter out of his pocket—the letter which was, perhaps, to destroy all the happiness this noble family enjoyed. As he unfolded it, Calyste's lively imagination called up the Marquise dressed as Camille Maupin had fantastically described her.

From Béatrix to Félicité.

"GENOA, *July 2nd.*

"I have not written to you, my dear friend, since our stay at Florence, but Venice and Rome took up all my time; and happiness, as you know, fills a large place in life. We are neither of us likely to take strict account of a letter more or less. I am a little tired; I insisted on seeing everything, and to a mind not easily satiated the repetition of pleasures brings fatigue. Our friend had great triumphs at the Scala, at the Fenice, and these last three days at the San Carlo. Three Italian operas in two years! You cannot say that love has made him idle.

"We have been warmly welcomed everywhere, but I should have preferred silence and solitude. Is not that the only mode of life that suits a woman in direct antagonism with the world? This was what I had expected. Love, my dear, is a more exacting master than marriage; but it is sweet to serve him. After having played at love all my life, I did not know that I must see the world again, even in glimpses, and the attentions paid me on all hands were so many wounds. I was no longer on an equal footing with women of the highest type. The more kindly I was treated, the more was my inferiority marked. Gennaro did not understand these subtleties, but he was so happy that I should have been graceless if I had not sacrificed such petty vanities to a thing so splendid as an artist's life.

"We live only by love, while men live by love and action—otherwise they would not be men. There are, however, immense disadvantages to a woman in the position in which I have placed myself; and you have avoided them. You have remained great in the face of the world which had no rights over you; you have perfect liberty, and I have lost mine. I am speaking only with reference to concerns of the heart, and not to social matters, which I have wholly sacrificed. You might be vain and wilful, you might have all the graces of a woman in love, who can give or refuse anything as she chooses; you had preserved the privilege

of being capricious, even in the interest of your affection and of the man you might like. In short, you, even now, have still your own sanction; I have not the freedom of feeling, which, as I think, it is always delightful to assert in love, even when the passion is an eternal one. I have not the right to quarrel in jest, which we women so highly and so rightly prize; is it not the line by which we sound the heart? I dare not threaten, I must rely for attractiveness on infinite docility and sweetness, I must be impressive through the immenseness of my love; I would rather die than give up Gennaro, for the holiness of my passion is its only plea for pardon.

"I did not hesitate between my social dignity and my own little dignity—a secret between me and my conscience. Though I have fits of melancholy, like the clouds which float across the clearest sky, to which we women like to give way, I silence them at once; they would look like regret. Dear me! I so fully understood the extent of my debt to him, that I have equipped myself with unlimited indulgence; but hitherto Gennaro has not roused my sensitive jealousy. Indeed, I cannot see how my dear great genius can do wrong. I am, my dear, rather like the devotees who argue with their God, for is it not to you that I owe my happiness? And you cannot doubt that I have often thought of you.

"At last I have seen Italy! As you saw it, as it ought to be seen, illuminated to the soul by love, as it is by its glorious sun and its masterpieces of art. I pity those who are incessantly fired by the admiration it calls for at every step when they have not a hand to clasp, a heart into which they may pour the overflow of emotions which then subside as they grow deeper. These two years are to me all my life, and my memory will have reaped a rich harvest. Did you not, as I did, dream of settling at Chiavari, of buying a palace at Venice, a villa at Sorrento, a house at Florence? Do not all women who love shun the world? And I, for ever an outcast, could I help longing to bury myself in a lovely landscape, in a heap of flowers, looking out on the pretty

sea, or a valley as good as the sea, like the valley you look on from Fiesole?

"But, alas, we are poor artists, and want of money is dragging the wanderers back to Paris again. Gennaro cannot bear me to feel that I have left all my luxury, and he is bringing a new work, a grand opera, to be rehearsed in Paris. Even at the cost of my love, I cannot bear to meet one of those looks from a woman or a man which would make me feel murderous. Yes! for I could hack any one to pieces who should condescend to pity me, should offer me the protection of patronage—like that enchanting Châteauneuf, who, in the time of Henri III., I think, spurred her horse to trample down the Provost of Paris for some such offence.

"So I am writing to tell you that without delay I shall arrive to join you at les Touches, and wait for our Gennaro in that quiet spot. You see how bold I am with my benefactress and sister. Still, the magnitude of the obligation will not betray my heart, like some others, into ingratitude.

"You have told me so much about the difficulties of the journey that I shall try to reach le Croisic by sea. This idea occurred to me on hearing that there was here a little Danish vessel, loaded with marble, which will put in at le Croisic to take up salt on its way back to the Baltic. By this voyage I shall avoid the fatigue and expense of traveling by post. I know you are not alone, and I am glad of it; I had some remorse in the midst of my happiness. You are the only person with whom I could bear to be alone without Conti. Will it not be a pleasure to you, too, to have a woman with you who will understand your happiness and not be jealous of it?

"Well, till our meeting! The wind is fair, and I am off, sending you a kiss."

"Well, well, she, too, knows how to love!" said Calyste to himself, folding up the letter with a sad expression.

This sadness flashed on his mother's heart like a gleam

lighting up an abyss. The Baron had just left the room. Fanny bolted the door to the turret, and returned to lean over the back of the chair in which her boy was sitting, as Dido's sister bends over her in Guérin's picture. She kissed his forehead and said:

"What is the matter, my child? what makes you unhappy? You promised to account to me for your constant visits to les Touches; I ought to bless its mistress, you say?"

"Yes, indeed," he replied. "She, my dear mother, has shown me all the defects of my education in these times, when men of noble birth must acquire personal merit if they are to restore their names to life again. I was as remote from my day as Guérande is from Paris. She has been, in a way, the mother of my intelligence."

"Not for that can I bless her!" said the Baroness, her eyes filling with tears.

"Mother," cried Calyste, on whose forehead the hot tears fell, drops of heartbroken motherhood, "mother, do not cry. Just now, when, to do her a pleasure, I proposed scouring the coast from the custom-house hut to the Bourg de Batz, she said to me, 'How anxious your mother would be!' "

"She said so! Then I can forgive her much," said Fanny.

"Félicité wishes me well," replied Calyste, "and she often checks herself from saying some of those hasty and doubtful things which artists let fall, so as not to shake my faith—knowing that it is not immovable. She has told me of the life led in Paris by youths of the highest rank, going from their country homes, as I might from mine, leaving their family without any fortune, and making great wealth by the force of their will and their intelligence. I can do what the Baron de Rastignac has done, and he is in the Ministry.—She gives me lessons on the piano, she teaches me Italian, she has let me into a thousand social secrets of which no one has an inkling at Guérande. She could not give me the treasures of her love; she gives me those of her vast intellect, her wit, her genius. She does not choose to be a mere pleasure, but a light to me; she offends none of my creeds; she believes in the nobility, she loves Brittany——"

"She has changed our Calyste," said the old blind woman, interrupting him, "for I understand nothing of this talk. You have a fine old house over your head, nephew, old relations who worship you, good, old servants; you can marry a good little Bretonne, a pious and well-bred girl who will make you happy, and you can reserve your ambitions for your eldest son, who will be three times as rich as you are if you are wise enough to live quietly and economically, in the shade and in the peace of the Lord, so as to redeem the family estates. That is as simple as a Breton heart. You will get rich less quickly, but far more surely."

"Your aunt is right, my darling; she cares as much for your happiness as I do. If I should not succeed in arranging your marriage with Miss Margaret, your uncle, Lord Fitz-William's daughter, it is almost certain that Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël will leave her money to either of her nieces you may prefer."

"And there will be a few crown pieces here!" said the old aunt in a low, mysterious voice.

"I! Marry at my age?" said he, with one of those looks which weaken a mother's reason. "Am I to have no sweet and crazy love-making? Am I never to tremble, thrill, flutter, fear, lie down under a pitiless gaze and presently melt it? May I never know the beauty that is free, the fancy of the soul, the clouds that fleet over the serene blue of happiness and that the breath of enjoyment blows away? May I never stand under a gutter spout without discovering that it is raining, like the lovers seen by Diderot? Shall I never hold a burning coal in the palm of my hand like the Duc de Lorraine? Shall I never climb a silken rope-ladder, nor cling to a rotten, old trellis without feeling it yield? Am I never to hide in a closet or under a bed? Can I know nothing of woman but wifely surrender, or of love but its equable lamplight? Is all my curiosity to be satiated before it is excited? Am I to live without ever feeling that fury of the heart which adds to a man's power? Am I to be a married monk?—No! I have set my teeth in the Paris

apple of civilization. Do you not perceive that by your chaste, your ignorant family habits you have laid the fire that is consuming me, and that I shall be burnt up before I can adore the divinity I see wherever I turn—in the green foliage and in the sand glowing in the sunshine, and in all the beautiful, lordly, and elegant women who are described in the books and poems I have devoured at Camille's? Alas! There is but one such woman in all Guérande, and that is you, mother! The lovely Blue Birds of my dreams come from Paris; they live in the pages of Lord Byron and Scott; they are Parisina, Effie, Minna! Or, again, that Royal Duchess I saw in the moors among the heath and broom, whose beauty sent my blood with a rush to the heart!"

These thoughts were clearer, more brilliant, more living, to the Baroness' eye, than art can make them to the reader; she saw them in a flash shot from the boy's glance like the arrows from a quiver that is upset. Though she had never read Beaumarchais, she thought, as any woman would, that it would be a crime to make this Cherubino marry.

"Oh, my dear boy!" said she, taking him in her arms, pressing him to her, and kissing his beautiful hair—still her own—"marry when you please, only be happy. It is not my part to tease you."

Mariotte came to lay the table. Gasselin had gone out to exercise Calyste's horse, for he had not ridden it these two months. The three women, the mother, the aunt, and Mariotte, were of one mind, with the natural cunning of women, to make much of Calyste when he dined at home. Breton penuriousness, fortified by the memories and habits of childhood, tried to contend with the civilization of Paris so faithfully represented at les Touches, so close to Guérande. Mariotte tried to disgust her young master with the elaborate dishes prepared in Camille Maupin's kitchen, as his mother and aunt vied with each other in attentions to enmesh their child in the nets of their tenderness, and to make comparisons impossible.

"Ah, ha! You have a *lubine* (a sort of fish), Monsieur

Calyste, and snipe, and pancakes such as you will never get anywhere but here," said Mariotte, with a knowing and triumphant air, as she looked down on the white cloth, a perfect sheet of snow.

After dinner, when his old aunt had settled down to her knitting again, when the curé of Guérande and the Chevalier du Halga came in, attracted by their game of *mouche,* Calyste went out to go back to les Touches, saying he must return Béatrix's letter.

Claude Vignon and Mademoiselle des Touches were still at table. The great critic had a tendency to greediness, and this vice was humored by Félicité, who knew how a woman makes herself indispensable by such attentions.

The dining-room, lately finished by considerable additions, showed how readily and how quickly a woman can marry the nature, adopt the profession, the passions, and the tastes of the man she loves, or means to love. The table had the rich and dazzling appearance which modern luxury, seconded by the improvements in manufactures, stamps on every detail. The noble but impoverished house of du Guénic knew not the antagonist with whom it had to do battle, nor how large a sum was needed to contend with the brand-new plate brought from Paris by Mademoiselle des Touches, with her china—thought good enough for the country—her fine linen, her silver gilt, all the trifles on her table, and all the skill of her man cook.

Calyste declined to take any of the liqueurs contained in one of the beautiful inlaid cases of precious woods, that might be shrines.

"Here is your letter," he said, with childish ostentation, looking at Claude, who was sipping a glass of West Indian liqueur.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Mademoiselle des Touches, tossing the letter across the table to Vignon, who read it, alternately lifting and setting down his glass.

"Why—that the women of Paris are very happy; they all have men of genius, who love them, to worship."

"Dear me, you are still but a rustic!" said Félicité, with a laugh. "What! You did not discover that she already loves him less, that——"

"It is self-evident!" said Claude Vignon, who had as yet read no more than the first page. "When a woman is really in love, does she trouble her head in the least about her position? Is she as finely observant as the Marquise? Can she calculate? Can she distinguish? Our dear Béatrix is tied to Conti by her pride; she is condemned to love him, come what may."

"Poor woman!" said Camille.

Calyste sat staring at the table, but he saw nothing. The beautiful creature in her fantastic costume, as sketched by Félicité that morning, rose before him, radiant with light; she smiled on him, she played with her fan, and her other hand, emerging from a frill of lace and cherry-colored velvet, lay white and still on the full folds of her magnificent petticoat.

"This is the very thing for you," said Claude Vignon, with a sardonic smile at Calyste.

Calyste was offended at the words *the very thing.*

"Do not suggest the idea of such an intrigue to the dear child; you do not know how dangerous such a jest may be. I know Béatrix; she has too much magnanimity of temper to change; besides, Conti will be with her."

"Ah!" said Claude Vignon, satirically, "a little twinge of jealousy, heh?"

"Can you suppose it?" said Camille, proudly.

"You are more clear-sighted than a mother could be," replied Claude.

"But, I ask you, is it possible?" and she looked at Calyste.

"And yet," Vignon went on, "they would be well matched. She is ten years older than he is; he would be the girl."

"A girl, monsieur, who has twice been under fire in la Vendée. If there had but been twenty thousand of such girls——"

"I was singing your praise," said Vignon, "an easier matter than singeing your beard."

"I have a sword to cut the beards of those who wear them too long," retorted Calyste.

"And I have a tongue that cuts sharply, too," replied Vignon, smiling. "We are Frenchmen—the affair can be arranged."

Mademoiselle des Touches gave Calyste a beseeching look, which calmed him at once.

"Why," said Félicité, to end the discussion, "why is it that youths, like my Calyste there, always begin by loving women no longer young?"

"I know of no more guileless and generous impulse," said Vignon. "It is the consequence of the delightful qualities of youth. And besides, to what end would old women come if it were not for such love? You are young and handsome, and will be for twenty years to come; before you we may speak plainly," he went on, with a keen glance at Mademoiselle des Touches. "In the first place, the semi-dowagers to whom very young men attach themselves know how to love far better than young women. A youth is too like a woman for a young woman to attract him. Such a passion is too suggestive of the myth of Narcissus. Besides this, there is, I believe, a common want of experience which keeps them asunder. Hence the reason which makes it true that a young woman's heart can only be understood by a man in whom long practice is veiled by his real or assumed passion, is the same as that which, allowing for differences of nature, makes a woman past her youth more seductive to a boy; he is intensely conscious that he shall succeed with her, and the woman's vanity is intensely flattered by his pursuit of her.

"Then, again, it is natural that the young should seize on fruit, and autumn offers many fine and luscious kinds. Is it nothing to meet those looks, at once bold and reserved, languishing at the proper moments, soft with the last gleams of love, so warm, so soothing? And the elaborate elegance of speech, the splendid ripe shoulders so finely filled out, the ample roundness, the rich and undulating plumpness, the hands full of dimples, the pulpy, well-nourished skin, the

brow full of overflowing sentiment, on which the light lingers, the hair, so carefully cherished and dressed, where fine partings of white skin are delicately traced, and the throat with those fine curves, the inviting nape, where every resource of art is applied to bring out the contrast between the hair and the tones of the flesh, to emphasize all the audacity of life and love? Dark women then get some of the tones of the fairest, the amber shade of maturity.

"Then, again, these women betray their knowledge of the world in their smiles, and display it in their conversation; they know how to talk; they will set the whole world before you to raise a smile; they have sublime touches of dignity and pride; they can shriek with despair in a way to break your heart, wail a farewell to love, knowing that it is futile, and only resuscitates passion; they grow young again by dint of varying the most desperately simple things. They constantly expected to be contradicted as to the falling off they so coquettishly proclaim, and the intoxication of their triumph is contagious. Their devotion is complete; they listen, in short, they love; they clutch at love as a man condemned to death clings to the smallest trifles of living; they are like those lawyers who can urge every plea in a case without fatiguing the Court; they exhaust every means in their power; indeed, perfect love can only be known in them.

"I doubt if they are ever forgotten, any more than we can forget anything vast and sublime.

"A young woman has a thousand other things to amuse her, these women have nothing; they have no conceit left, no vanity, no meanness; their love is the Loire at its mouth, immense, swelled by every disenchantment, every affluent of life, and that is why—my daughter is dumb!" he ended, seeing Mademoiselle des Touches in an attitude of ecstasy, clutching Calyste's hand tightly, perhaps to thank him for having been the cause of such a moment for her, of such a tribute of praise that she could detect no snare in it.

All through the evening Claude Vignon and Félicité were brilliantly witty, telling anecdotes and describing the life of

Paris to Calyste, who quite fell in love with Claude, for wit exerts a peculiar charm on men of feeling.

"I should not be in the least surprised to see Madame de Rochefide land here to-morrow with Conti, who is accompanying her, no doubt," said Claude at the end of the evening. "When I came up from le Croisic, the seamen had spied a small ship, Danish, Swedish, or Norwegian."

This speech brought the color to Camille's cheeks, calm as she was.

That night, again, Madame du Guénic sat up for her son till one o'clock, unable to imagine what he could be doing at les Touches if Félicité did not love him.

"He must be in the way," thought this delightful mother.

"What have you had to talk about so long?" she asked, as she saw him come in.

"Oh, mother! I never spent a more delightful evening. Genius is a great, a most sublime thing! Why did you not bestow genius on me? With genius a man must be able to choose the woman he loves from all the world; she must inevitably be his!"

"But you are handsome, my Calyste."

"Beauty has no place but in women. And besides, Claude Vignon is fine. Men of genius have a brow that beams, eyes where lightnings play—and I, unhappy wretch, I only know how to love."

"They say that is all-sufficient, my darling," said she, kissing his forehead.

"Really, truly?"

"I have been told so. I have had no experience."

It was Calyste's turn to kiss his mother's hand with reverence.

"I will love for all those who might have been your adorers," said he.

"Dear child, it is in some degree your duty; you have inherited all my feelings. So do not be rash; try to love only high-souled women, if you must love."

What young man, welling over with passion and suppressed vitality, but would have had the triumphant idea of going to le Croisic to see Madame de Rochefide land, so as to be able to study her, himself unknown? Calyste greatly amazed his father and mother, who knew nothing of the fair Marquise's arrival, by setting out in the morning without waiting for breakfast. Heaven knows how briskly the boy stepped out. He felt as if some new strength had come to his aid, he was so light; he kept close under the walls of les Touches to avoid being seen. The delightful boy was ashamed of his ardor, and had perhaps a miserable fear of being laughed at; Félicité and Claude Vignon were so horribly keen-sighted! And, then, in such cases a youth believes that his forehead is transparent.

He followed the zigzag path across the maze of salt-marshes, reached the sands, and was across them with a skip and a hop, in spite of the scorching sun that twinkled on them.

This brought him to the edge of the strand, banked up with a breakwater, near which stands a house where travelers may find shelter from storms, sea-gales, rain, and the whirlwind. It is not always possible to cross the little strait, nor are there always boats, and it is convenient, while they are crossing from the port, to have shelter for the horses, asses, merchandise, or passengers' luggage. From thence men can scan the open sea and the port of le Croisic; and from thence Calyste soon discerned two boats coming, loaded with baggage—bundles, trunks, carpet-bags, and cases, of which the shape and size proclaimed to the natives the arrival of extraordinary things, such as could only belong to a voyager of distinction.

In one of these boats sat a young woman with a straw hat and green veil, accompanied by a man. This boat was the first to come to land. Calyste felt a thrill; but their appearance showed them to be a maid and a man-servant, and he dared not question them.

"Are you crossing to le Croisic, Monsieur Calyste?" asked

one of the boatmen, who knew him; but he replied only by a negative shake of the head, ashamed of having his name mentioned.

Calyste was enchanted at the sight of a trunk covered with waterproof canvas, on which he read *Madame la Marquise de Rochefide.* The name glittered in his eyes like some talisman; it had to him a purport of mysterious doom; he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that he should fall in love with this woman; the smallest things relating to her interested him already, spurred his fancy and his curiosity. Why?—In the burning desert of its immeasurable and objectless desires does not youth put forth all its powers towards the first woman who comes within reach? Béatrix had fallen heir to the love that Camille had disdained.

Calyste watched the landing of the luggage, looking out from time to time at le Croisic, hoping to see a boat come out of the harbor, cross to this little headland, and reveal to him the Béatrix who had already become to him what another Béatrix was to Dante, an eternal statue of marble on whose hands he would hang his flowers and wreaths. He stood with his arms folded, lost in the dream of expectancy. A thing worthy of remark, but which nevertheless has never been remarked, is the way in which we frequently subordinate our feelings to our will, how we pledge ourself to ourself, as it were, and how we make our fate; chance has certainly far less share in it than we suppose.

"I see no horses," said the maid, sitting on a trunk.

"And I see no carriage-road," said the valet.

"Well, horses have certainly been here," replied the woman, pointing to their traces. "Monsieur," said she, addressing Calyste, "is that the road leading to Guérande?"

"Yes," said he; "whom are you expecting?"

"We were told that we should be met, fetched to les Touches.—If they are very late, I do not know how Madame can dress," said she to the man. "You had better walk on to les Touches. What a land of savages!"

It dawned on Calyste that he was in a false position.

"Then your mistress is going to les Touches?" he asked.

"Mademoiselle came to meet her at seven this morning," was the reply. "Ah! here come the horses."

Calyste fled, running back to Guérande with the swiftness and lightness of a chamois, and doubling like a hare to avoid being seen by the servants from les Touches; still, he met two of them in the narrow way across the marsh which he had to cross.

"Shall I go in? Shall I not?" he asked himself as he saw the tops of the pine-trees of les Touches.

He was afraid; he returned to Guérande hang-dog and repentant, and walked up and down the Mall, where he continued the discussion with himself.

He started as he caught sight of les Touches, and studied the weather-cocks.

"She can have no idea of my excitement," said he to himself.

His wandering thoughts became so many grapnels that caught in his heart and held the Marquise there. Calyste had felt none of these terrors, these anticipatory joys with regard to Camille; he had first met her on horseback, and his desire had sprung up, as at the sight of a beautiful flower he might have longed to pluck. These vacillations constitute a sort of poem in a timid soul. Fired by the first flames of imagination, these souls rise up in wrath, are appeased, and eager by turns, and in silence and solitude reach the utmost heights of love before they have even spoken to the object of so many struggles.

Calyste saw from afar, on the Mall, the Chevalier du Halga, walking with Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël; he hid himself. The Chevalier and the old lady, believing themselves alone on the Mall, were talking aloud.

"Since Charlotte de Kergarouët is coming to you," said the Chevalier, "keep her three or four months. How can you expect her to flirt with Calyste? She never stays here long enough to attempt it; whereas, if they see each other every day, the two children will end by being desperately in

love, and you will see them married this winter. If you say two words of your plans to Charlotte, she will at once say four to Calyste; and a girl of sixteen will certainly win the day against a woman of forty-something!"

The two old folks turned to retrace their steps. Calyste heard no more, but he had understood what Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's plan was. In his present frame of mind nothing could be more disastrous. Is it in the fever of a preconceived passion that a young man will accept as his wife a girl found for him by others? Calyste, who cared not a straw for Charlotte de Kergarouët, felt inclined to repulse her. Considerations of money could not touch him; he had been accustomed from childhood to the modest style of his father's house; besides, seeing Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël live as poorly as the Guénics themselves, he had no notion of her wealth. And a youth brought up as Calyste had been would not, in any case, consider anything but feeling; and all his mind was set on the Marquise.

Compared with the portrait drawn by Camille, what was Charlotte? The companion of his childhood, whom he treated as his sister.

He did not get home till five o'clock. When he went into the room, his mother, with a melancholy smile, handed him a note from Mademoiselle des Touches, as follows:—

"My dear Calyste,—The beautiful Marquise de Rochefide has arrived; we count on you to do honor to her advent. Claude, always satirical, declares that you will be Bice and she Dante. The honor of Brittany and of the Guénics is at stake when there is a Casteran to be welcomed. So let us meet soon.—Yours,

"Camille Maupin.

"Come as you are, without ceremony, or we shall look ridiculous."

Calyste showed his mother the note, and went at once.

"What are these Casterans?" said she to the Baron.

"An old Norman family, related to William the Conqueror," he replied. "Their arms are In tierce per fess azure gules and or, a horse rearing argent hoofed or.—The beautiful creature for whom le Gars was killed at Fougères in 1800 was the daughter of a Casteran who became a nun at Séez, and was made abbess after being thrown over by the Duc de Verneuil."

"And the Rochefides?"

"I do not know the name; I should want to see their arms," said he.

The Baroness was a little relieved at hearing that the Marquise Béatrix de Rochefide was of an old family; still, she felt some alarm at knowing that her son was exposed to fresh fascinations.

Calyste, as he walked, felt the most violent and yet delightful impulses; his throat was choked, his heart full, his brain confused; he was devoured by fever. He wanted to walk slower, but a superior power urged him on. All young men have known this perturbation of the senses caused by a vague hope: a subtle fire flames within and raises a halo, like the glory shown about the divine persons in a sacred picture, through which they see nature in a glow and woman radiant. Are they not then, like the saints themselves, full of faith, ardor, hope, and purity?

The young Breton found the whole party in Camille's little private drawing-room. It was by this time nearly six o'clock; through the windows the sinking sun shed a ruddy light, broken by the trees; the air was still, the room was full of the soft gloom that women love so well.

"Here is the member for Brittany," said Camille Maupin, smiling to her friend, as Calyste lifted the tapestry curtain over the door. "As punctual as a king!"

"You recognized his step?" said Claude Vignon to Mademoiselle des Touches.

Calyste bowed to the Marquise, who merely nodded to him; he had not looked at her. He shook hands with Claude Vignon, who offered him his hand.

"Here is the great man of whom you have heard so much, Gennaro Conti," Camille went on, without answering Claude Vignon.

She introduced to Calyste a man of middle height, thin and slender, with chestnut hair, eyes that were almost orange color, with a white, freckled skin, in short, so exactly the well-known head of Lord Byron, that it would be superfluous to describe it—but perhaps he held it better. Conti was not a little proud of this resemblance.

"I am delighted, being but one day at les Touches, to meet Monsieur," said Gennaro.

"It is my part to say as much to you," replied Calyste, with sufficient ease of manner.

"He is as handsome as an angel!" the Marquise said to Félicité. Calyste, standing between the divan and the two women, overheard the words, though spoken in a whisper. He moved to an armchair, and stole watchful looks at the Marquise. In the soft light of the setting sun he saw lounging on the divan, as though a sculptor had placed her in position, a white, sinuous figure which seemed to dazzle his sight. Félicité, without knowing it, had served her friend well by her description.

Béatrix was superior to the not too flattering portrait drawn by Camille. Was it not partly for the stranger's benefit that Béatrix had placed in her splendid hair bunches of blue cornflowers, which showed off the pale gleam of her ringlets, arranged to frame her face and flicker over her cheeks? Her eyes were set in circles darkened by fatigue, but only to the tone of the purest and most opalescent mother-of-pearl; her cheeks were as bright as her eyes. Under her white skin, as delicate as the silky lining of an egg-shell, life flushed in the purple blood. The finish of her features was exquisite; her brow seemed diaphanous. This fair and gentle head, finely set on a long neck of marvelous beauty, lent itself to the most varying expression.

Her waist, slight enough to span, had a bewitching grace; her bare shoulders gleamed in the twilight like a white ca-

mellia in black hair. The bosom, well supported, but covered with a clear handkerchief, showed two exquisitely enticing curves. The muslin dress—white flowered with blue, the wide sleeves, the bodice, pointed, and without any sash, the shoes with sandals crossed over fine thread stockings—all showed perfect knowledge of the arts of dress. Earrings of silver filagree, marvels of Genoese work which no doubt were coming into fashion, were admirably suited to the exquisite softness of the fair hair starred with cornflowers.

At a single eager glance Calyste took in all this beauty, which stamped itself on his soul. Béatrix, so fair, and Félicité, so dark, recalled the "Keepsake" contrasts, so much affected by English engravers and draughtsmen. They were woman's weakness and woman's strength in their utmost expression, a perfect antithesis. These two women could never be rivals; each had her empire. They were like a delicate pale periwinkle or lily by the side of a sumptuous and gorgeous red poppy, or a turquoise by a ruby. In an instant Calyste was possessed by a passion which crowned the secret working of his hopes, his fears, his doubts. Mademoiselle des Touches had roused his senses, Béatrix fired his mind and heart. The young Breton was conscious of the birth within himself of an all-conquering force that would respect nothing. And he shot at Conti a look of envy and hatred, gloomy, and full of alarms, a look he had never had for Claude Vignon.

Calyste called upon all his resolution to restrain himself, thinking, nevertheless, that the Turks were very right to keep their women shut up, and that such beautiful creatures should be forbidden to show themselves in their tempting witcheries to young men aflame with love. This hot hurricane was lulled as soon as Béatrix turned her eyes on him and her gentle voice made itself heard; the poor boy already feared her as he feared God.

The dinner-bell rang.

"Calyste, give your arm to the Marquise," said Mademoiselle des Touches, taking Conti on her right and Claude on her left, as she stood aside to let the young couple pass.

Thus to go down the old staircase of les Touches was to Calyste like a first battle; his heart failed him, he found nothing to say, a faint moisture stood on his brow and down his spine. His arm trembled so violently that at the bottom step the Marquise said to him:

"What is the matter?"

"Never," said he in a choked voice, "never in my life have I seen a woman so beautiful as you are, excepting my mother; and I cannot control my agitation."

"Why, have you not Camille Maupin here?"

"But what a difference!" said Calyste artlessly.

"Ha! Calyste," Félicité whispered in his ear; "did I not tell you that you would forget me as though I had never existed? Sit there, next her on her right, and Vignon on her left.—As for you, Gennaro, I keep you by me," she added, laughing; "we will keep an eye on her flirtations."

The accent in which Camille spoke struck Claude, who looked at her with the wily and apparently absent glance, which in him showed that he was observant. He never ceased watching Mademoiselle des Touches throughout dinner.

"Flirtations!" replied the Marquise, drawing off her gloves and showing her beautiful hands; "I have every excuse; on one side of me I have a poet," and she turned to Claude; "on the other poetry."

Gennaro bestowed on Calyste a gaze full of flattery.

By candle-light Béatrix looked even more beautiful than before. The pale gleam of the wax-lights cast a satin sheen on her forehead, set sparks in her gazelle-like eyes, and fell through her silky ringlets, making separate hairs shine like threads of gold. With a graceful movement she threw off her gauze scarf, uncovering her shoulders. Calyste could then see the delicate nape, as white as milk, with a deep hollow that parted into two, curving off towards each shoulder with a lovely and delusive symmetry. The changes of aspect in which pretty women indulge produce very little effect in the fashionable world, where every eye is blasé, but they commit fearful ravages in a soul as fresh as was Calyste's. This bust, so unlike

Camille's, revealed a perfectly different character in Béatrix. There could be seen pride of race, a tenacity peculiar to the aristocracy, and a certain hardness in that double muscle of the shoulder, which is perhaps the last surviving vestige of the conqueror's strength.

Calyste found it very difficult to seem to eat; he was full of nervous feelings, which took away his hunger. As in all young men, Nature was in the clutches of those throes which precede first love, and stamp it so deeply on the soul. At his age the ardor of the heart repressed by the ardor of the moral sense leads to an internal conflict, which accounts for the long, respectful hesitancy, the deep absorption of love, the absence of all self-interest,—all the peculiar attractions of youths whose heart and life are pure.

As he noted—by stealth, so as not to rouse Gennaro's jealous suspicions—all the details which make the Marquise de Rochefide so supremely beautiful, Calyste was oppressed by the majesty of the lady beloved; he felt himself shrink before the haughtiness of some of her glances, the imposing aspect of her face, overflowing with aristocratic self-consciousness, a pride, which women can express by slight movements, by airs of the head and a magnificent slowness of gesture, which are all less affected and less studied than might be supposed. There is a sentiment behind all these modes of expression. The ambiguous position in which Béatrix found herself, compelled her to keep a watch over herself, to be imposing without being ridiculous; and women of the highest stamp can all achieve this, though it is the rock on which ordinary women are wrecked.

Béatrix could guess from Félicité's looks all the secret adoration she inspired in her neighbor, and that it was unworthy of her to encourage it; so from time to time she bestowed on him a repellant glance that fell on him like an avalanche of snow. The unfortunate youth appealed to Mademoiselle des Touches by a gaze in which she felt the tears kept down in his heart by superhuman determination, and Félicité kindly asked him why he ate nothing. Calyste stuffed to order, and

made a feint of joining in the conversation. The idea of being tiresome instead of agreeable was unendurable, and hammered at his brain. He was all the more bashful because he saw, behind the Marquise's chair, the man-servant he had met in the morning on the jetty, who would no doubt report his curiosity.

Whether he were contrite or happy, Madame de Rochefide paid no attention to him. Mademoiselle des Touches had led her to talk of her journey in Italy, and she gave a very witty account of the point-blank fire of passion with which a little Russian diplomate at Florence had honored her, laughing at these little young men who fling themselves at a woman as a locust rushes on grass. She made Claude Vignon and Gennaro laugh, and Félicité also; but these darts of sarcasm went straight to Calyste's heart, who only heard words through the humming in his ears and brain. The poor boy made no vow, as some obstinate men have done, to win this woman at any cost; no, he was not angry, he was miserable. When he discerned in Béatrix an intention to sacrifice him at Gennaro's feet, he only said to himself—"If only I can serve her in any way!" and allowed himself to be trampled on with the meekness of a lamb.

"How is it," said Claude Vignon to the Marquise, "that you, who so much admire poetry, give it so bad a reception? Such artless admiration, so sweet in its expression, with no second thought, no reservation, is not that the poetry of the heart? Confess now that it gives you a sense of satisfaction and well-being."

"Certainly," she replied, "but we should be very unhappy and, above all, very worthless if we yielded to every passion we inspire."

"If you made no selection," said Conti, "we should not be so proud of being loved."

"When shall I be chosen and distinguished by a woman?" Calyste wondered to himself, restraining his agony of emotion with difficulty.

He reddened like a sufferer on whose wound a finger is laid. Mademoiselle des Touches was startled by the expression she

saw in Calyste's face, and tried to comfort him with a sympathizing look. Claude Vignon caught that look. From that moment the writer's spirits rose, and he vented his gaiety in sarcasms; he maintained that love lived only in desire, that most women were mistaken in their love, that they often loved for reasons unknown to the men and to themselves, that they sometimes wished to deceive themselves; that the noblest of them were still insincere.

"Be content to criticise books, and do not criticise our feelings," said Camille, with an imperious flash.

The dinner ceased to be lively. Claude Vignon's satire had made both the women grave. Calyste was in acute torment in spite of the happiness of gazing at Béatrix. Conti tried to read Madame de Rochefide's eyes and guess her thoughts. When the meal was ended, Mademoiselle des Touches took Calyste's arm, left the other two men to the Marquise, and allowed them to lead the way, so as to say to the youth:

"My dear boy, if the Marquise falls in love with you, she will pitch Conti out of the window; but you are behaving in such a way as to tighten their bonds. Even if she were enchanted by your worship, could she take any notice of it? Command yourself."

"She is so hard on me, she will never love me," said Calyste; "and if she does not love me, I shall die."

"Die! you! My dear Calyste, you are childish," said Camille. "You would not have died for me, then?"

"You made yourself my friend," he replied.

After the little chat that always accompanies the coffee, Vignon begged Conti to sing. Mademoiselle des Touches sat down to the piano. Camille and Gennaro sang *Dunque il mio bene tu mia sarai,* the final duet in Zingarelli's *Romeo e Giulietta,* one of the most pathetic pages of modern music. The passage *Di tanti palpiti* expresses love in all its passion. Calyste, sitting in the armchair where he had sat when Félicité had told him the story of the Marquise, listened devoutly. Béatrix and Vignon stood on each side of the piano.

Conti's exquisite voice blended perfectly with Félicité's. They both had frequently sung the piece; they knew all its

resources, and agreed wonderfully in bringing them out. It was in their hands what the musician had intended to create, a poem of divine melancholy, the swan-song of two lovers. When the duet was ended the hearers were all in a state of feeling that cannot find expression in vulgar applause.

"Oh, Music is the queen of the arts!" exclaimed the Marquise.

"Camille gives the first place to youth and beauty—the queen of all poetry," said Claude Vignon.

Mademoiselle des Touches looked at Claude, dissembling a vague uneasiness. Béatrix, not seeing Calyste, looked round to see what effect the music had had on him, less out of interest in him than for Conti's satisfaction. In a recess she saw a pale face covered with tears. At the sight she hastily turned away, as if some acute pain had stung her, and looked at Gennaro.

It was not merely that Music had risen up before Calyste, had touched him with her divine hand, had launched him on creation and stripped it of its mysteries to his eyes—he was overwhelmed by Conti's genius. In spite of what Camille Maupin had told him of the man's character, he believed at this moment that the singer must have a beautiful soul, a heart full of love. How was he to contend against such an artist? How could a woman ever cease to adore him? The song must pierce her soul like another soul.

The poor boy was as much overcome by poetic feeling as by despair: he saw himself as so small a thing! This ingenuous conviction of his own nothingness was to be read in his face, mingling with his admiration. He did not observe Béatrix, who, attracted to Calyste by the contagion of genuine feeling, pointed him out by a glance to Mademoiselle des Touches.

"Oh! such a delightful nature!" said Félicité. "Conti, you will never receive any applause to compare with the homage paid you by this boy. Let us sing a trio.—Come, Béatrix, my dear."

When the Marquise, Camille, and Conti had returned to the piano, Calyste rose unperceived, flung himself on a sofa in the adjoining bedroom, of which the door was open, and remained there sunk in despair.

PART II

THE DRAMA

"What is the matter with you, my boy?" said Claude Vignon, stealing quietly in after him and taking his hand. "You are in love, you believe yourself scorned; but it is not so. In a few days the field will be open to you, you will be supreme here, and be loved by more than one woman; in fact, if you know how to manage matters, you will be a Sultan here."

"What are you saying?" cried Calyste, starting to his feet and dragging Claude away into the library. "Who that is here loves me?"

"Camille," said Vignon.

"Camille loves me?" said Calyste. "And what of you?"

"I," said Claude, "I——"

He paused. Then he sat down and rested his head against a pillow, in the deepest melancholy.

"I am weary of life," he went on, after a short silence, "and I have not the courage to end it. I wish I were mistaken in what I have told you; but within the last few days more than one vivid gleam has flashed upon me. I did not wander about the rocks of le Croisic for my amusement, on my soul! The bitterness of my tone when, on my return, I found you talking to Camille, had its source in the depths of my wounded self-respect. I will have an explanation presently with Camille. Two minds so clear-sighted as hers and mine cannot deceive each other. Between two professional duelists a fight is soon ended. So I may at once announce my departure. Yes, I shall leave les Touches, to-morrow perhaps, with Conti.

"When we are no longer here, some strange—perhaps terrible—things will certainly happen, and I shall be sorry not

to look on at these struggles of passion, so rare in France, and so dramatic!—You are very young to enter on so perilous a fight; I am interested in you. But for the deep disgust I feel for women, I would stay to help you to play the game; it is difficult; you may lose it; you have two remarkable women to deal with, and you are already too much in love with one to make use of the other.

"Béatrix must surely have some tenacity in her nature, and Camille has magnanimity. You, perhaps, like some fragile and brittle thing, will be dashed between the two rocks, swept away by the torrent of passion. Take care."

Calyste's amazement on hearing these words allowed Claude Vignon to finish his speech and leave the lad, who remained in the position of a traveler in the Alps to whom his guide has proved the depth of an abyss by dropping a stone in.

He had heard from Claude himself that Camille loved him, Calyste, at the moment when he knew that his love for Béatrix would end only with his life. There was something in the situation too much for such a guileless young soul. Crushed by immense regret that weighed upon him for the past, killed by the perplexities of the present, between Béatrix, whom he loved, and Camille, whom he no longer loved, when Claude said that she loved him, the poor youth was desperate; he sat undecided, lost in thought. He vainly sought to guess the reasons for which Félicité had rejected his devotion, to go to Paris and accept that of Claude Vignon.

Now and again Madame de Rochefide's voice came to his ear, pure and clear, reviving the violent excitement from which he had fled in leaving the drawing-room. Several times he could hardly master himself so far as to restrain a fierce desire to seize her and snatch her away.—What would become of him? Could he ever come again to les Touches? Knowing that Camille loved him, how could he here worship Béatrix?—He could find no issue from his difficulties.

Gradually silence fell on the house. Without heeding it, he heard the shutting of doors. Then suddenly he counted the twelve strokes of midnight told by the clock in the next room,

where the voices of Camille and Claude now roused him from the numbing contemplation of the future. A light shone there amid the darkness. Before he could show himself, he heard these dreadful words spoken by Vignon.

"You came back from Paris madly in love with Calyste," he was saying to Félicité. "But you were appalled at the consequences of such a passion at your age; it would lead you into a gulf, a hell—to suicide perhaps. Love can exist only in the belief that it is eternal, and you could foresee, a few paces before you in life, a terrible parting—weariness and old age putting a dreadful end to a beautiful poem. You remember *Adolphe*, the disastrous termination of the loves of Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant, who were, nevertheless, much better matched in age than you and Calyste.

"So, then, you took me, as men take fascines, to raise an entrenchment between yourself and the enemy. But while you tried to attach me to les Touches, was it not that you might spend your days in secret worship of your divinity? But to carry out such a scheme, at once unworthy and sublime, you should have chosen a common man, or a man so absorbed by lofty thought that he would be easily deceived. You fancied that I was simple, and as easy to cheat as a man of genius. I am, it would seem, no more than a clever man: I saw through you. When yesterday I sang the praises of women of your age, and explained to you why Calyste loved you, do you suppose that I thought all your ecstatic looks—brilliant, enchanting—were meant for me? Had I not already read your soul? The eyes, indeed, were fixed on mine, but the heart throbbed for Calyste.—You have never been loved, my poor Maupin; and you never will be now, after denying yourself the beautiful fruit which chance put in your way at the very gates of woman's hell, which must close at the touch of the figure 50."

"And why has love always avoided me?" she asked, in a broken voice. "You who know everything, tell me."

"Why, you are unamiable," said he; "you will not yield to love, you want it to yield to you. You can perhaps be led into

the mischief and spirit of a school-boy; but you have no youth of heart, your mind it too deep, you never were artless and you cannot begin now. Your charm lies in mystery; it is abstract, and not practical. And, again, your power repels very powerful natures; they dread a conflict. Your strength may attract young souls, which, like Calyste's, love to feel protected; but, in the long run, it is fatiguing. You are superior, sublime! You must accept the disadvantages of these two qualities; they are wearisome."

"What a verdict!" cried Camille. "Can I never be a woman? Am I a monster?"

"Possibly," said Claude.

"We shall see," cried the woman, stung to the quick.

"Good-night, my dear. I leave to-morrow.—I owe you no grudge, Camille; I think you the greatest of women; but if I should consent to play the part any longer of a screen or a curtain," said Claude, with too marked inflections of his voice, "you would despise me utterly. We can part now without grief or remorse; we have no happiness to mourn for, no hopes to disappoint.

"To you, as to some infinitely rare men of genius, love is not what Nature made it—a vehement necessity, with acute but transient delights attached to its satisfaction, and then death; you regard it as what Christianity has made it: an ideal realm full of noble sentiments, of immense small things, of poetry and spiritual sensations, of sacrifices, flowers of morality, enchanting harmonies, placed far above all vulgar grossness, but whither two beings joined to be one angel are carried up on the wings of pleasure. This was what I hoped for; I thought I held one of the keys which open the door that is shut to so many persons, and through which we soar into infinitude. You were there already! And so I was deceived.

"I am going back to misery in my vast prison, Paris. Such a deception at the beginning of my career would have been enough to make me flee from woman; now, it fills my soul with such disenchantment as casts me for ever into appalling solitude; I shall be destitute even of the faith which helped

the Holy Fathers to people it with sacred visions.—This, my dear Camille, is what a superior nature brings us to. We may each of us sing the terrible chant that a poet has put into the mouth of Moses addressing the Almighty:

"O Lord! Thou hast made me powerful and alone!"

At this moment Calyste came in.

"I ought to let you know that I am here," said he.

Mademoiselle des Touches looked absolutely terrified; a sudden color flushed her calm features with a fiery red. All through the scene she was handsomer than she had ever been in her life.

"We thought you had gone, Calyste," said Claude; "but this involuntary indiscretion on both sides will have done no harm; perhaps you will feel more free at les Touches now that you know Félicité so completely. Her silence shows me that I was not mistaken as to the part she intended that I should play. She loves you, as I told you; but she loves you for yourself, and not for herself—a feeling which few women are fitted to conceive of or to cling to: very few of them know the delights of pain kept alive by desire. It is one of the grander passions reserved for men;—but she is somewhat of a man," he added, with a smile. "Your passion for Béatrix will torture her and make her happy, both at once."

Tears rose to Mademoiselle des Touches' eyes; she dared not look either at the merciless Claude or the ingenuous Calyste. She was frightened at having been understood; she had not supposed that any man, whatever his gifts, could divine such a torment of refined feeling, such lofty heroism as hers. And Calyste, seeing her so humiliated at finding her magnanimity betrayed, sympathized with the agitation of the woman he had placed so high, and whom he beheld so stricken. By an irresistible impulse, he fell at Camille's feet and kissed her hands, hiding his tear-washed face in them.

"Claude!" she cried, "do not desert me; what will become of me?"

"What have you to fear?" replied the critic. "Calyste already loves the Marquise like a madman. You can certainly have no stronger barrier between him and yourself than this passion fanned into life by your own act. It is quite as effectual as I could be. Yesterday there was danger for you and for him; but to-day everything will give you maternal joys," and he gave her a mocking glance. "You will be proud of his triumphs."

Félicité looked at Calyste, who, at these words, raised his head with a hasty movement. Claude Vignon was sufficiently revenged by the pleasure he took in seeing their confusion.

"You pushed him towards Madame de Rochefide," Vignon went on; "he is now under the spell. You have dug your own grave. If you had but trusted yourself to me, you would have avoided the disasters that await you."

"Disasters!" cried Camille Maupin, raising Calyste's head to the level of her own, kissing his hair, and wetting it with her tears. "No, Calyste. Forget all you have just heard, and count me for nothing!"

She stood up in front of the two men, drawn to her full height, quelling them by the lightnings that flashed from her eyes in which all her soul shone.

"While Claude was speaking," she went on, "I saw all the beauty, the dignity of hopeless love; is it not the only sentiment that brings us near to God?—Do not love me, Calyste; but I—I will love you as no other woman can ever love!"

It was the wildest cry that ever a wounded eagle sent out from his eyrie. Claude, on one knee, took her hand and kissed it.

"Now go, my dear boy," said Mademoiselle des Touches to Calyste; "your mother may be uneasy."

Calyste returned to Guérande at a leisurely pace, turning round to see the light which shone from the windows of Béatrix's rooms. He was himself surprised that he felt so little pity for Camille; he was almost annoyed with her for having deprived him of fifteen months of happiness. And again, now

and then, he felt the same thrill in himself that Camille had just caused him, he felt the tears she had shed on his hair, he suffered in her suffering, he fancied he could hear the moans —for, no doubt, she was moaning—of this wonderful woman for whom he had so longed a few days since.

As he opened the courtyard gate at home, where all was silent, he saw through the window his mother working by the primitive lamp while waiting for him. Tears rose to his eyes at the sight.

"What more has happened?" asked Fanny, her face expressive of terrible anxiety. Calyste's only reply was to clasp his mother in his arms and kiss her cheeks, her forehead, her hair, with the passionate effusion which delights a mother, infusing into her the subtle fires of the life she gave.

"It is you that I love!" said Calyste to his mother, blushing, and almost shamefaced; "you who live for me alone, whom I would fain make happy."

"But you are not in your usual frame of mind, my child," said the Baroness, looking at her son. "What has happened?"

"Camille loves me," said he; "and I no longer love her."

The Baroness drew him towards her and kissed him on the forehead, and in the deep silence of the gloomy old tapestried room he could hear the rapid beating of his mother's heart. The Irishwoman was jealous of Camille, and had suspected the truth. While awaiting her son night after night she had studied that woman's passion; led by the light of persistent meditation, she had entered into Camille's heart; and without being able to account for it, she had understood that in that unwedded soul there was a sort of motherly affection. Calyste's story horrified this simple and guiless mother.

"Well," said she, after a pause, "love Madame de Rochefide; she will cause me no sorrow."

Béatrix was not free; she could not upset any of the plans they had made for Calyste's happiness, at least so Fanny thought; she saw in her a sort of daughter-in-law to love, and not a rival mother to contend with.

"But Béatrix will never love me!" cried Calyste.

"Perhaps," replied the Baroness, with a knowing air. "Did you not say that she is to be alone to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"Well, my child," said the mother, coloring, "jealousy lurks in all our hearts, but I did not know that I should ever find it at the bottom of my own, for I did not think that any one would try to rob me of my Calyste's affection!" She sighed. "I fancied," she went on, "that marriage would be to you what it was to me. What lights you have thrown on my mind during these two months! What colors are reflected on your very natural passion, my poor darling!—Well, still seem to love your Mademoiselle des Touches; the Marquise will be jealous of her, and will be yours."

"Oh, my sweet mother, Camille would never have told me that!" cried Calyste, taking his mother by the waist, and kissing her in the neck.

"You make me very wicked, you bad child," said she, quite happy at seeing the beaming face hope gave to her son, who gaily went up the winding stairs.

Next morning Calyste desired Gasselin to stand on the road from Guérande to Saint-Nazaire, and watch for Mademoiselle des Touches' carriage; then, as it went past, he was to count the persons in it.

Gasselin returned just as the family had sat down together at breakfast.

"What can have happened?" said Mademoiselle du Guénic; "Gasselin is running as if Guérande were burning."

"He must have caught the rat," said Mariotte, who was bringing in the coffee, milk, and toast.

"He is coming from the town and not from the garden," replied the blind woman.

"But the rat's hole is behind the wall to the front by the street," said Mariotte.

"Monsieur le Chevalier, there were five of them; four inside and the coachman."

"Two ladies on the back seat?" asked Calyste.

"And two gentlemen in front," replied Gasselin.

"Saddle my father's horse, ride after them; be at Saint-Nazaire by the time the boat starts for Paimbœuf; and if the two men go on board, come back and tell me as fast as you can gallop."

Gasselin went.

"Why, nephew, you have the very devil in you!" exclaimed old aunt Zéphirine.

"Let him please himself, sister," cried the Baron. "He was as gloomy as an owl, and now he is as merry as a lark."

"Perhaps you told him that our dear Charlotte was coming," said the old lady, turning to her sister-in-law.

"No," replied the Baroness.

"I thought he might wish to go to meet her," said Mademoiselle du Guénic slily.

"If Charlotte is to stay three months with her aunt, he has time enough to see her in," replied the Baroness.

"Why, sister, what has occurred since yesterday?" asked the old lady. "You were so delighted to think that Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël was going this morning to fetch her niece."

"Jacquelin wants me to marry Charlotte to snatch me from perdition, aunt," said Calyste, laughing, and giving his mother a look of intelligence. "I was on the Mall this morning when Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël was talking to Monsieur du Halga; she did not reflect that it would be far worse perdition for me to be married at my age."

"It is written above," cried the old aunt, interrupting Calyste, "that I am to die neither happy nor at peace. I should have liked to see our family continued, and some of our lands redeemed—but nothing of the kind! Can you, my fine nephew, put anything in the scale to outweigh such duties as these?"

"Why," said the Baron, "can Mademoiselle des Touches hinder Calyste from marrying in due course? I must go to see her."

"I can assure you, father, that Félicité will never be an obstacle in the way of my marriage."

"I cannot make head or tail of it!" said the blind woman, who knew nothing of her nephew's sudden passion for the Marquise de Rochefide.

The mother kept her son's secret; in such matters silence is instinctive in all women. The old aunt sank into deep meditation, listening with all her might, spying every voice, every sound, to guess the mystery they were keeping from her.

Gasselin soon returned, and told his young master that he had not needed to go so far as Saint-Nazaire to learn that Mademoiselle des Touches and the lady would return alone; he had heard it in the town, from Bernus, the carrier, who had taken charge of the gentlemen's baggage.

"They will come back alone?" said Calyste. "Bring out my horse."

Gasselin supposed from his young master's voice that there was something serious on hand; he saddled both the horses, loaded the pistols without saying anything, and dressed to ride out with Calyste. Calyste was so delighted to know that Claude and Gennaro were gone, that he never thought of the party he would meet at Saint-Nazaire; he thought only of the pleasure of escorting the Marquise. He took his old father's hands and pressed them affectionately, he kissed his mother, and put his arm round his old aunt's waist.

"Well, at any rate, I like him better thus than when he is sad," said old Zéphirine.

"Where are you off to, Chevalier?" asked his father.

"To Saint-Nazaire."

"The deuce you are! And when is the wedding to be?" said the Baron, who thought he was in a hurry to see Charlotte de Kergarouët. "I should like to be a grandfather; it is high time."

When Gasselin showed his evident intention of riding out with Calyste, it occurred to the young man that he might return in Camille's carriage with Béatrix, leaving his horse in Gasselin's care, and he clapped the man on the shoulder, saying:

"That was well thought of."

"So I should think," replied Gasselin.

"Spare the horses, my boy," said his father, coming out on the steps with Fanny; "they have twelve leagues before them."

Calyste exchanged looks full of meaning with his mother, and was gone.

"Dearest treasure!" said she, seeing him bend his head under the top of the gate.

"God preserve him!" replied the Baron, "for we shall never make another."

This little speech, in the rather coarse taste of a country gentleman, made the Baroness shiver.

"My nephew is not so much in love with Charlotte as to rush to meet her," said old Mademoiselle to Mariotte, who was clearing the table.

"Oh, a fine lady has come to les Touches, a Marquise, and he is running after her. Well, well, he is young!" said Mariotte.

"Those women will be the death of him," said Mademoiselle du Guénic.

"That won't kill him, mademoiselle, quite the contrary," replied Mariotte, who seemed quite happy in Calyste's happiness.

Calyste was riding at a pace that might have killed his horse, when Gasselin very happily asked his master whether he wished to arrive before the departure of the boat; this was by no means his purpose; he had no wish to be seen by either Conti or Vignon. The young man reined in his horse and looked complacently at the double furrow traced by the wheels of the carriage on the sandy parts of the road. He was wildly gay merely at the thought: "She passed this way; she will come back this way; her eyes rested on those woods, on these trees!"

"What a pretty road!" said he to Gasselin.

"Yes, sir, Brittany is the finest country in the world," replied the servant. "Are there such flowers in the hedges, or green lanes that wind like this one, anywhere else to be found?"

"Nowhere, Gasselin."

"Here comes Bernus' carriage," said Gasselin.

"Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël will be in it with her niece; let us hide," said Calyste.

"Hide here, sir! are you crazy? We are in the midst of the sands."

The carriage, which was in fact crawling up a sandy hill above Saint-Nazaire, presently appeared, in all the artless simplicity of rude Breton construction. To Calyste's great astonishment the conveyance was full.

"We have left Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël and her sister and her niece in a great pother," said the driver to Gasselin; "all the places had been taken by the custom-house."

"I am done for!" cried Calyste. The vehicle was in fact full of custom-house men on their way, no doubt, to relieve those in charge at the salt-marshes.

When Calyste reached the little esplanade surrounding the Church of Saint-Nazaire, whence there is a view of Paimbœuf and of the majestic estuary of the Loire where it struggles with the tide, he found Camille and the Marquise waiving their handkerchiefs to bid a last farewell to the two passengers borne away by the steam packet. Béatrix was quite bewitching, her face tenderly shaded by the reflection from a rice-straw hat on which poppies were lightly piled, tied by a scarlet ribbon; in a flowered muslin dress, one little, slender foot put forward in a green gaitered shoe, leaning on her slight parasol-stick, and waving her well-gloved hand. Nothing is more strikingly effective than a woman on a rock, like a statue on its pedestal.

Conti could see Calyste go up to Camille.

"I thought," said the youth to Mademoiselle des Touches, "that you two ladies would be returning alone."

"That was very nice of you, Calyste," she replied, taking his hand. Béatrix looked round, glanced at her young adorer, and gave him the most imperious flash at her command. A smile that the Marquise caught on Camille's eloquent lips made her feel the vulgarity of this impulse, worthy

of a mere *bourgeoise.* Madame de Rochefide then said with a smile to Calyste:

"And was it not rather impertinent to suppose that I could bore Camille on the way?"

"My dear, one man for two widows is not much in the way," said Mademoiselle des Touches, taking Calyste's arm, and leaving Béatrix to gaze after the boat.

At this instant Calyste heard in the street of what must be called the port of Saint-Nazaire the voices of Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, Charlotte, and Gasselin, all three chattering like magpies. The old maid was catechising Gasselin, and wanted to know what had brought him and his master to Saint-Nazaire; Mademoiselle des Touches' carriage had made a commotion.

Before the lad could escape, Charlotte had caught sight of him.

"There is Calyste!" cried the girl.

"Go and offer them my carriage; their woman can sit by my coachman," said Camille, who knew that Madame de Kergarouët, with her daughter and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, had failed to get places.

Calyste, who could not avoid obeying Camille, went to deliver this message. As soon as she knew that she would have to ride with the Marquise de Rochefide and the famous Camille Maupin, Madame de Kergarouët ignored her elder sister's objections; Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël refused to avail herself of what she called the devil's chariot. At Nantes, people lived in rather more civilized latitudes than at Guérande; Camille was admired; she was regarded as the Muse of Brittany and an honor to the country; she excited as much curiosity as jealousy. The absolution granted her in Paris by the fashionable world was consecrated by Mademoiselle des Touches' fine fortune, and perhaps by her former successes at Nantes, which was proud of having been the birthplace of Camille Maupin.

So the Viscountess, crazy with curiosity, dragged away her old sister, turning a deaf ear to her jeremiads.

"Good-morning, Calyste," said little Charlotte.

"Good-morning, Charlotte," replied Calyste, but he did not offer her his arm.

Both speechless with surprise, she at his coldness, he at his own cruelty, they went up the hollow ravine that is called a street at Saint-Nazaire, following the two sisters in silence. In an instant the girl of sixteen saw the castle in the air which her romantic hopes had built and furnished crumble into ruins. She and Calyste had so constantly played together during their childhood, they had been so intimately connected, that she imagined her future life secure. She had hurried on, carried away by heedless happiness, like a bird rushing down on a field of wheat; she was checked in her flight without being able to imagine what the obstacle could be.

"What is the matter, Calyste?" she asked, taking his hand.

"Nothing," he replied, withdrawing his hand with terrible haste as he thought of his aunt's schemes and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's.

Tears filled Charlotte's eyes. She looked at the handsome youth without animosity; but she was to feel the first pangs of jealousy and know the dreadful rage of rivalry at the sight of the two Parisian beauties, which led her to suspect the cause of Calyste's coldness.

Charlotte de Kergarouët was of middle height; she had rustic, rosy cheeks, a round face with wide-awake black eyes that affected intelligence, a quantity of brown hair, a round waist, flat back, and thin arms, and the crisp, decided tone of speech adopted by country-bred girls who do not wish to seem simpletons. She was the spoilt child of the family in consequence of her aunt's preference for her. At this moment she was wearing the plaid tweed cloak lined with green silk that she had put on for the passage in the steamboat. Her traveling gown of cheap stuff, with a chaste gathered body and a finely pleated collar, would presently strike her as being hideous in comparison with the fresh morning dress worn by Béatrix and Camille. She would be painfully con-

scious of stockings soiled on the rocks and the boats she had jumped into, of old leather shoes, chosen especially that there might be nothing good to spoil on the journey, as is the manner and custom of provincial folk.

As to the Vicomtesse de Kergarouët, she was typically provincial. Tall, lean, faded, full of covert pretentiousness which only showed when it was wounded, a great talker, and by dint of talk picking up a few ideas as a billiard-player makes a cannon, which gave her a reputation for brilliancy; trying to snub Parisians by a display of blunt country shrewdness, and an assumption of perfect contentment constantly paraded; stooping in the hope of being picked up and furious at being left on her knees; fishing for compliments, as the English have it, and not always catching them; dressing in a style at once exaggerated and slatternly; fancying that a lack of politeness was lofty impertinence, and that she could distress people greatly by paying them no attention; refusing things she wished for to have them offered a second time and pressed on her beyond reason; her head full of extinct subjects, and much astonished to find herself behind the times; finally, hardly able to abstain for one hour from dragging in Nantes, and the small lions of Nantes, and the gossip of the upper ten of Nantes; complaining of Nantes and criticising Nantes, and then regarding as a personal affront the concurrence extorted from the politeness of those who rashly agreed with all she said.

Her manners, her speech, and her ideas had to some extent rubbed off on her four daughters.

To meet Camille Maupin and Madame de Rochefide! Here was fame for the future, and matter for a hundred conversations! She marched on the church as if to take it by storm, flourishing her handkerchief, which she unfolded to show the corners ponderously embroidered at home, and trimmed with worn-out lace. She had a rather stalwart gait, which did not matter in a woman of seven-and-forty.

"Monsieur le Chevalier," said she, and she pointed to Calyste, who was following sulkily enough with Charlotte, "has

informed us of your amiable offer; but my sister, my daughter, and I fear we shall incommode you."

"Not I, sister; I shall not inconvenience these ladies," said the old maid sharply. "I can surely find a horse in Saint-Nazaire to carry me home."

Camille and Béatrix exchanged sidelong looks which Calyste noted, and that glance was enough to annihilate every memory of his youth, all his belief in the Kergarouët-Pen-Hoëls, and to wreck for ever the schemes laid by the two families.

"Five can sit quite easily in the carriage," replied Mademoiselle des Touches, on whom Jacqueline had turned her back. "Even if we were horribly squeezed, which is impossible, as you are all so slight, I should be amply compensated by the pleasure of doing a service to friends of Calyste's. Your maid, madame, will find a seat; and your bundles, if you have any, can be put in the rumble; I have no servant with me."

The Viscountess was profusely grateful, and blamed her sister Jacqueline, who had been in such a hurry for her niece that she would not give her time to travel by land in their carriage; to be sure, the post road was not only longer, but expensive; she must return immediately to Nantes, where she had left three more little kittens eager to have her back again—and she stroked her daughter's chin. But Charlotte put on a little victimized air as she looked up at her mother, which made it seem likely that the Viscountess bored her four daughters most consumedly by trotting them out as persistently as, in *Tristram Shandy*, Corporal Trim puts his cap on.

"You are a happy mother, and you must——" Camille began; but she broke off, remembering that Béatrix must have deserted her boy to follow Conti.

"Oh!" said the Viscountess, "though it is my misfortune to spend my life in the country and at Nantes, I have the comfort of knowing that my children adore me. Have you any children?" she asked Camille.

"I am Mademoiselle des Touches," replied Camille. "Madame is the Marquise de Rochefide."

"Then you are to be pitied for not knowing the greatest happiness we poor mere women can have. Is it not so, madame?" said she to the Marquise, to remedy her blunder. "But you have many compensations."

A hot tear welled up in Béatrix's eyes; she turned hastily away and went to the clumsy parapet at the edge of the rock, whither Calyste followed her.

"Madame," said Camille in a low voice to Madame de Kergarouët, "do you not know that the Marquise is separated from her husband, that she has not seen her son for two years, and does not know when they may meet again?"

"Dear!" cried Madame de Kergarouët. "Poor lady! Is it a judicial separation?"

"No, incompatability," said Camille.

"I can quite understand that," replied the Viscountess, undaunted.

Old Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël had entrenched herself a few yards off with her dear Charlotte. Calyste, after assuring himself that no one could see them, took the Marquise's hand and kissed it, leaving a tear on it. Béatrix turned on him, her eyes dried by anger; some cruel word was on her tongue, but she could say nothing as she saw the tears on the beautiful face of the angelic youth, as deeply moved as she was.

"Good heavens, Calyste!" said Camille, in a whisper, as he rejoined them with Madame de Rochefide, "you will have *that* for a mother-in-law, and that little gaby for your wife."

"Because her aunt is rich," added Calyste, sarcastically.

The whole party now moved towards the inn, and the Viscountess thought it incumbent on her to make some satirical remarks to Camille on the savages of Saint-Nazaire.

"I love Brittany, madame," replied Félicité, gravely. "I was born at Guérande."

Calyste could not help admiring Mademoiselle des Touches, who, by the tones of her voice, her steady gaze, and placid

manners, put him at his ease, notwithstanding the terrible confessions of the scene that had taken place last night. Still, she looked tired; her features betrayed that she had not slept; they looked thickened, but the forehead suppressed the internal storm with relentless calm.

"What queens!" said he to Charlotte, pointing to Béatrix and Camille, as he gave the girl his arm, to Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's great satisfaction.

"What notion was this of your mother's," said the old lady, also giving a lean arm to her niece, "to throw us into the company of this wretched woman?"

"Oh, aunt! a woman who is the glory of Brittany."

"The disgrace, child!—Do not let me see you too cringing to her."

"Mademoiselle, Charlotte is right," said Calyste; "you are unjust."

"Oh, she has bewitched you!" retorted Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"I have the same friendship for her that I have for you," said Calyste.

"How long have the du Guénics taken to lying?" said the old woman.

"Since the Pen-Hoëls took to being deaf," retorted Calyste.

"Then you are not in love with her?" asked the aunt, delighted.

"I was, but I am no longer," he replied.

"Bad boy! Then why have you given us so much anxiety? I knew that love was but a folly; only marriage is to be relied on," said she, looking at Charlotte.

Charlotte, somewhat reassured, hoped to reconquer her advantages by an appeal to the memories of their childhood, and clung to Calyste's arm; but he vowed to himself that he would come to a clear understanding with the little heiress.

"Oh, what famous games of *mouche* we will have, Calyste," said she, "and what capital fun!"

The horses were put in; Camille made the Viscountess and Charlotte take the best seats, for Jacqueline had disap-

peared; then she and the Marquise sat with their backs to the horses. Calyste, forced to give up the pleasure he had promised himself, rode at the side of the carriage; and the horses, all tired, went slowly enough to allow of his gazing at Béatrix.

History has kept no record of the singular conversation of these four persons, so strangely thrown together by chance in this carriage; for it is impossible to accept the hundred and something versions which were current at Nantes as to the stories, the repartees, and the witticisms which Madame de Kergarouët heard from Camille Maupin *himself*. She took good care not to repeat, nor even understand, the replies made by Mademoiselle des Touches to all her ridiculous inquiries—such as writers so often hear, and by which they are made to pay dearly for their few joys.

"How do you write your books?" asked Madame de Kergarouët.

"Why, just as you do your needlework," said Camille, "your netting, or cross-stitch."

"And where did you find all those deep observations and attractive pictures?"

"Where you find all the clever things you say, madame.—Nothing is easier than writing, and if you chose——"

"Ah, it all lies in the choosing? I should never have thought it!—And which of your works do you yourself prefer?"

"It is difficult to have any preference for these little kittens."

"You are surfeited with compliments; it is impossible to say anything new."

"Believe me, madame, I appreciate the form you give to yours."

The Viscountess, anxious not to seem neglectful of the Marquise, said, looking archly at her:

"I shall never forget this drive, sitting between wit and beauty."

The Marquise laughed.

"You flatter me, madame," said she. "It is not in nature that wit should be noticed in the company of genius, and I have not yet said much."

Charlotte, keenly alive to her mother's absurdity, looked at her, hoping to check her; but the Viscountess still valiantly showed fight against the two laughing Parisian ladies. Calyste, trotting at an easy pace by the carriage, could only see the two women on the back seat, and his eyes fell on them alternately, betraying a very melancholy mood. Béatrix, who could not help being seen, persistently avoided looking at the youth; with a placidity that is maddening to a lover, she sat with her hands folded over her crossed shawl, and seemed lost in deep meditation.

At a spot where the road is shaded and as moist and green as a cool forest path, where the wheels of the carriage were scarcely audible, and the wind brought a resinous scent, Camille remarked on the beauty of the place, and, leaning her hand on Béatrix's knee, she pointed to Calyste and said:

"How well he rides!"

"Calyste?" said Madame de Kergarouët. "He is a capital horseman."

"Oh, Calyste is so nice!" said Charlotte.

"There are so many Englishmen just like him——" replied the Marquise, indifferently, without finishing her sentence.

"His mother is Irish—an O'Brien," said Charlotte, feeling personally attacked.

Camille and the Marquise drove into Guérande with the Vicomtesse de Kergarouët and her daughter, to the great astonishment of the gaping townspeople; they left their traveling companions at the corner of the little Rue du Guénic, where there was something very like a crowd. Calyste had ridden on to announce to his mother the arrival of the party, who were expected to dinner. The meal had been politely put off till four o'clock.

The Chevalier went back to give the ladies his arm; he kissed Camille's hand, hoping to touch that of the Marquise, but she firmly kept her arms folded, and he besought her in vain with eyes sparkling through wasted tears.

"You little goose!" said Camille in his ear, with a light, friendly kiss on it.

"True enough!" said Calyste to himself as the carriage turned. "I forget my mother's counsels—but I believe I always shall forget them."

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, who arrived valiantly mounted on a hired nag, Madame de Kergarouët, and Charlotte found the table laid, and were cordially, if not luxuriously, received by the du Guénics. Old Zéphirine had sent for certain bottles of fine wine from the depths of the cellar, and Mariotte had surpassed herself in Breton dishes. The Viscountess, delighted to have traveled with the famous Camille Maupin, tried to expatiate on modern literature, and the place held in it by Camille; but as it had been with the game of whist, so it was with literary matters; neither the du Guénics, nor the Curé, who looked in, nor the Chevalier du Halga, understood anything about them. The Abbé and the old naval officer sipped the liqueurs at dessert.

As soon as Mariotte, helped by Gasselin and by Madame de Kergarouët's maid, had cleared the table, there was an enthusiastic clamor for *mouche*. Joy prevailed. Everybody believed Calyste to be free, and saw him married ere long to little Charlotte. Calyste sat silent. For the first time in his life he was making comparisons between the Kergarouëts and the two elegant and clever women, full of taste, who, at this very moment, were probably laughing at the two provincials, if he might judge from the first glances they had exchanged. Fanny, knowing Calyste's secret, noticed his dejection. Charlotte's coquetting and her mother's attacks had no effect on him. Her dear boy was evidently bored; his body was in this room, where of yore he could have been amused by the absurdities of *mouche*, but his spirit was wandering round les Touches.

"How can I send him off to Camille's?" thought the mother, who loved him and who was bored because he was bored. Her affection lent her inventiveness.

"You are dying to be off to les Touches to see *her?*" she whispered to Calyste.

The boy's answer was a smile and a blush that thrilled this devoted mother to her heart's very core.

"Madame," said she to the Viscountess, "you will be very uncomfortable to-morrow in the carriage chaise, and obliged to start very early in the morning. Would it not be better if you were to have Mademoiselle des Touches' carriage? Go over, Calyste," said she, turning to her son, "and arrange the matter at les Touches; but come back quickly."

"It will not take ten minutes," cried Calyste, giving his mother a wild hug out on the steps, whither she followed him.

Calyste flew with the speed of a fawn, and was in the entrance hall of les Touches just as Camille and Béatrix came out of the dining-room after dinner. He had the wit to offer his arm to Félicité.

"You have deserted the Viscountess and her daughter for us," said she, pressing his arm. "We are able to appreciate the extent of the sacrifice."

"Are these Kergarouëts related to the Portenduères and old Admiral de Kergarouët, whose widow married Charles de Vandenesse?" Madame de Rochefide asked Camille.

"Mademoiselle Charlotte is the Admiral's grandniece," replied Camille.

"She is a charming young person," said Béatrix, seating herself in a Gothic armchair; "the very thing for Monsieur du Guénic."

"That marriage shall never be!" cried Camille, vehemently.

Calyste, overwhelmed by the cold indifference of the Marquise, who spoke of the little country girl as the only creature for whom he was a match, sat speechless and bewildered.

"And why not, Camille?" said Madame de Rochefide.

"My dear," said Camille, seeing Calyste's despair, "I did not advise Conti to get married, and I believe I was delightful to him—you are ungenerous."

Béatrix looked at her with surprise mingled with indefinable suspicions. Calyste almost understood Camille's self-immolation as he saw the pale flush rise in her cheeks, which, in her, betrayed the most violent emotions: he went up to

her awkwardly enough, took her hand, and kissed it. Camille sat down to the piano with an easy air, as if equally sure of her friend and of the lover she had claimed, turning her back upon them, and leaving them to each other. She improvised some variations on airs, unconsciously suggested by her thoughts, for they were all deeply sad. The Marquise appeared to be listening; but she was watching Calyste, who was too young and too guileless to play the part suggested to him by Camille, and sat lost in ecstasy before his real idol. At the end of an hour, during which Mademoiselle des Touches gave herself up to her jealous feelings, Béatrix went to her room.

Camille at once led Calyste into her own room, so as not to be overheard, for women have an admirable sense of distrust.

"My child," said she, "you must pretend to love me or you are lost. You are a perfect child; you know nothing about women, you know only how to love. To love and to be loved are two very different things. You are rushing into terrible suffering. I want you to be happy. If you provoke Béatrix, not in her pride, but in her obstinacy, she is capable of flying off to join Conti at a few leagues from Paris. Then what would become of you?"

"I should love her," replied Calyste.

"You would not see her again."

"Oh, yes, I should," said he.

"Pray how?"

"I should follow her."

"But you are as poor as Job, my dear child!"

"My father, Gasselin, and I lived in la Vendée for three months on a hundred and fifty francs, marching day and night."

"Calyste," said Félicité, "listen to me. I see you are too honest to act a part; I do not wish to corrupt so pure a nature as yours. I will take it all on myself. Béatrix shall love you."

"Is it possible?" he cried, clasping his hands.

"Yes," said Camille. "But we must undo the vows she had made to herself. I will lie for you. Only, do not interfere in any way with the arduous task I am about to undertake. The Marquise has much aristocratic cunning; she is intellectually suspicious; no hunter ever had to take more difficult game; so in this case, my poor boy, the sportsman must take his dog's advice. Will you promise to obey me blindly? I will be your Fox," said she, naming Calyste's best hound.

"What, then, am I to do?" replied the young man.

"Very little," said Camille. "Come here every day at noon. I, like an impatient mistress, shall always be at the window of the corridor that looks out on the Guérande road to see you coming. I shall fly to my room, so as not to be seen—not to let you know the depth of a passion that is a burthen on you; but sometimes you will see me and wave your handkerchief to me. Then in the courtyard, and as you come upstairs, you must put on a look of some annoyance. That will be no dissimulation, my child," said she, leaning her head on his breast, "will it?—Do not hurry up; look out of the staircase window on to the garden to look for Béatrix. When she is there—and she will be there, never fear—if she sees you, come straight, but very slowly, to the little drawing-room, and thence to my room. If you should see me at the window spying your treachery, you must start back that I may not catch you imploring a glance from Béatrix. Once in my room you will be my prisoner.—Yes; we will sit there till four o'clock. You may spend the time in reading; I will smoke. You will be horribly bored by not seeing her, but I will provide you with interesting books. You have read nothing of George Sand's; I will send a man to-night to buy her works at Nantes, and those of some other writers that are unknown to you.

"I shall be the first to leave the room; you must not put down your book or come into the little drawing-room till you hear Béatrix in there talking to me. Whenever you see a

music-book open on the piano, you can ask if you may stay. You may be positively rude to me if you can; I give you leave; all will be well."

"I know, Camille," said he, with delightful good faith, "that you have the rarest affection for me; it makes me quite sorry that I ever saw Béatrix; but what do you hope for?"

"In a week Béatrix will be crazy about you."

"Good God!" cried he, "is that possible?" and, clasping his hands, he fell on his knees before Camille, who was touched and happy to give him such joy at her own cost.

"Listen to me," said she. "If you speak to the Marquise—not merely in the way of conversation, but if you exchange even a few words with her—if you allow her to question you, if you fail in the wordless part I set you to play, and which is certainly easy enough, understand clearly," and she spoke in a serious tone, "you will lose her for ever."

"I do not understand anything of all this, Camille," cried Calyste, looking at her with adorable guilelessness.

"If you understood, you would not be the exquisite child that you are, the noble, handsome Calyste," said she, taking his hand and kissing it.

And Calyste did what he had never done before; he put his arm round Camille and kissed her gently in the neck, without passion, but tenderly, as he kissed his mother. Mademoiselle des Touches could not restrain a burst of tears.

"Now go, child," said she, "and tell your Viscountess that my carriage is at her orders."

Calyste wanted to stay, but he was obliged to obey Camille's imperious and imperative gesture. He went home in high spirits, for he was sure of being loved within a week by the beautiful Rochefide.

The *mouche* players found in him the Calyste they had lost these two months. Charlotte ascribed the change to her own presence. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël was affectionately teasing. The Abbé Grimont tried to read in the Baroness' eyes the reason for the calm he saw there. The Chevalier du Halga rubbed his hands.

The two old maids were as lively as a couple of lizards. The Viscountess owed five francs worth of accumulated fines. Zéphirine's avarice was so keenly excited that she lamented her inability to see the cards, and was sharply severe on her sister-in-law, who was distracted from the game by Calyste's good spirits, and who asked him a question now and then without understanding his replies.

The game went on till eleven o'clock. Two players had retired; the Baron and du Halga were asleep in their arm-chairs. Mariotte had made some buckwheat cakes; the Baroness brought out her tea-caddy; and before the Kergarouëts left, the noble house of du Guénic offered its guests a collation, with fresh butter, fruit, and cream, for which the silver teapot was brought out, and the English china tea-service sent to the Baroness by one of her aunts. This air of modern splendor in that antique room, the Baroness' exquisite grace, accustomed as a good Irishwoman to make and pour out tea, a great business with Englishwomen, were really delightful. The greatest luxury would not have given such a simple, unpretending, and dignified effect as this impulse of glad hospitality.

When there was no one left in the room but the Baroness and her son, she looked inquiringly at Calyste.

"What happened this evening at les Touches?" she asked.

Calyste told her of the hope Camille had put into his heart and of her strange instructions.

"Poor woman!" exclaimed Fanny, clasping her hands, and for the first time pitying Mademoiselle des Touches.

Some minutes after Calyste had left, Béatrix, who had heard him leave the house, came into her friend's room, and found her sunk on a sofa, her eyes wet with tears.

"What is the matter, Félicité?" asked the Marquise.

"That I am forty and in love, my dear!" said Mademoiselle des Touches, in a tone of terrible fury, her eyes suddenly dry and hard. "If only you could know, Béatrix, how many tears I shed daily over the lost days of my youth! To

be loved out of pity, to know that one's pittance of happiness is earned by painful toil, by catlike tricks, by snares laid for the innocence and virtue of a mere boy—is not that shameful? Happily, we find a sort of absolution in the infinitude of passion, in the energy of happiness, in the certainty of being for ever supreme above other women in a young heart, on which our name is graven by unforgettable pleasure and insane self-sacrifice. Yet, if he asked it of me, I would throw myself into the sea at his least signal. Sometimes I catch myself wishing that he would desire it; it would be a sacrifice, and not suicide.

"Oh! Béatrix, in coming here you set me a cruel task! I know how difficult it is to triumph against you; but you love Conti, you are noble and generous, and you will not deceive me; on the contrary, you will help me to preserve my Calyste. I was prepared for the impression you would make on him, but I have not been so foolish as to seem jealous; that would but add fuel to the fire. On the contrary, I announced your arrival, depicting you in such bright colors that you could never come up to the portrait, and unluckily you are handsomer than ever."

This vehement lament, in which truth and untruth were mingled, completely deceived Madame de Rochefide. Claude Vignon had told Conti his reasons for leaving; Béatrix was, of course, informed, so she showed magnanimity by behaving coldly to Calyste; but at this instant there awoke in her that thrill of joy which every woman feels at the bottom of her heart on hearing that she is loved. The love she inspires in any man implies an unfeigned flattery which it is impossible not to appreciate; but when the man belongs to another woman, his homage gives more than joy, it is heavenly bliss. Béatrix sat down by her friend, and was full of little coaxing ways.

"You have not a white hair," said she; "you have not a wrinkle; your temples are smooth still, while I know many a woman of thirty obliged to cover hers. Look, my dear," she added, raising her curls, "what my journey cost me."

She showed the faintest pucker that ruffled the surface of her exquisite skin; she turned up her sleeve and displayed the same wrinkles on her wrists, where the transparent texture already showed lines, and a network of swollen veins, and three deep marks made a bracelet of furrows.

"Are not these the two spots which can tell no lies, as a writer, investigating our miseries, has said? We must suffer much before we see the truth of his terrible shrewdness; but, happily for us, most men know nothing about it, and do not read that atrocious writer."

"Your letter told me all," replied Camille. "Happiness is not fatuous; you boasted too much of yours. In love, truth is deaf, dumb, and blind. And I, knowing you had reasons for throwing over Conti, dreaded your visit here. My dear, Calyste is an angel; he is as good as he is handsome; the poor innocent will not resist one look from you, he admires you too much not to love on the smallest encouragement; your disdain will preserve him to me. I confess it with the cowardice of true passion: If you take him from me, you kill me. *Adolphe,* that terrible book by Benjamin Constant, has told us of Adolphe's sufferings; but what of the woman's, heh? He did not study them enough to depict them, and what woman would dare reveal them? They would discredit our sex, humiliate our virtues, add to our vices. Ah! if I may measure them by my fears, these tortures are like the torments of hell. But if he deserts me, my determination is fixed."

"And what have you determined?" asked Béatrix, with an eagerness that was a shock to Camille.

On this the two friends looked at each other with the keenness of two Venetian inquisitors of State, a swift glance, in which their souls met and struck fire like two flints. The Marquise's eyes fell.

"Besides man there is only God!" said the famous woman gravely. "God is the unknown. I should cast myself into it as into a gulf. Calyste has just sworn that he admires you only as he might admire a picture; but you are eight-and-twenty, and in all the splendor of your beauty. So the strug-

gle between him and me has begun by a falsehood. Happily I know how to win."

"And how is that?"

"That, my dear, is my secret. Leave me the advantages of my age. Though Claude Vignon has cast me into the abyss—me, when I had raised myself to a spot which I believed to be inaccessible—I may at least pluck the pale blossoms, etiolated but delicious, which grow at the foot of the precipice."

Madame de Rochefide was moulded like wax by Mademoiselle des Touches, who reveled in savage pleasure as she involved her in her meshes. Camille sent her to bed, nettled with curiosity, tossed between jealousy and generosity, but certainly thinking much about the handsome youth.

"She would be delighted if she could betray me," said Camille to herself, as they kissed and said good-night.

Then, when she was alone, the author made way for the woman—she melted into tears; she filled her hookah with tobacco dipped in opium, and spent the greater part of the night smoking, and thus numbing the tortures of her love, while seeing, through the clouds of smoke, Calyste's charming head.

"What a fine book might be written containing the story of my sorrows!" said she to herself; "but it has been done. Sappho lived before me. Sappho was young! A touching and lovely heroine indeed is a woman of forty! Smoke your hookah, my poor Camille, you have not even the privilege of making a poem out of your woes; this crowns them all!"

She did not go to bed till daybreak, mingling tears, spasms of rage, and magnanimous resolutions in the long meditation wherein she sometimes considered the mysteries of the Catholic religion, of which she had never thought in the course of her reckless life as an artist and an unbelieving writer.

Next day, Calyste, advised by his mother to act exactly on Camille's instructions, came at noon and stole mysteriously up to Mademoiselle des Touches' room, where he found plenty of books. Félicité sat in an armchair by the window, smoking, and gazing alternately at the wild marsh landscape at the sea,

and at Calyste, with whom she exchanged a few words concerning Béatrix. At a certain moment, seeing the Marquise walking in the garden, she went to the window to unfasten the curtains, so that her friend should see her, and drew them to shut out the light, leaving only a strip that fell on Calyste's book.

"I shall ask you to stay to dinner this evening, my child," said she, tumbling his hair, "and you must refuse, looking at Béatrix; you will have no difficulty in making her understand how deeply you regret being unable to remain here."

At about four o'clock Camille left him and went to play the dreadful farce of her false happiness to the Marquise, whom she brought back to the drawing-room. Calyste then came out of the adjoining room; at that moment he felt the shame of his position. The look he gave Béatrix, though watched for by Félicité, was even more expressive than she had expected. Béatrix was beautifully dressed.

"How elegant you are, my sweetheart!" said Camille, when Calyste had left.

These manœuvres went on for six days; they were seconded, without Calyste's knowledge, by the most ingenious conversations between Camille and her friend. There was between the two women a duel without truce, in which the weapons were cunning, feints, generosity, false confessions, astute confidences, in which one hid her love and the other stripped hers bare, while nevertheless the iron sharpness, red hot with Camille's treacherous words, pierced her friend's heart to the core, implanting some of those evil feelings which good women find it so hard to suppress. Béatrix in the end took offence at the suspicions betrayed by Camille; she thought them dishonoring to both alike; she was delighted to discover in the great authoress the weakness of her sex, and longed for the pleasure of showing her where her superiority ended, how she might be humiliated.

"Well, my dear, what are you going to tell him to-day?" she asked, with a spiteful glance at her friend, when the imaginary lover asked leave to remain. "On Monday we had some-

thing to talk over; on Tuesday you had too poor a dinner; on Wednesday you were afraid of annoying the Baroness; on Thursday we were going out together; yesterday you bid him good-bye as soon as he opened his mouth. Now, I want him to stay to-day, poor boy!"

"Already, my dear!" said Camille, with biting irony.

Béatrix colored.

"Then stay, Monsieur du Guénic," said Mademoiselle des Touches, assuming a queenly air, as though she were nettled.

Béatrix turned cold and hard; she was crushing, satirical, and intolerable to Calyste, whom Félicité sent off to play *mouche* with Mademoiselle de Kergarouët.

"That girl is not dangerous!" said Béatrix, smiling.

Young men in love are like starving people, the cook's preparations do not satisfy them; they think too much of the end to understand the means. As he turned from les Touches to Guérande, Calyste's mind was full of Béatrix; he did not know what deep feminine skill Félicité was employing to promote his interests—to use a cant phrase. In the course of this week the Marquise had written but one letter to Conti, a symptom of indifference which had not escaped Camille.

Calyste's whole life was concentrated in the short moments when he saw Béatrix; this drop of water, far from quenching his thirst, only increased it. The magic words, "You shall be loved," spoken by Camille and endorsed by his mother, were the talisman by which he checked the fire of his passion. He tried to kill time; he could not sleep, and cheated his sleeplessness by reading, bringing home a barrow-load of books every evening, as Mariotte expressed it. His aunt cursed Mademoiselle des Touches; but the Baroness, who had often gone up to her son's room on seeing a light there, knew the secret of his wakefulness. Though Fanny had never got beyond her timidity as an ignorant girl, and love's books had remained closed to her, her motherly tenderness guided her to certain notions; still, the abysses of the sentiment were dark to her and hidden by clouds, and she was very much alarmed at the

state in which she saw her son, terrifying herself over the one absorbing and incomprehensive desire that was consuming him.

Calyste had, in fact, but one idea; the image of Béatrix was always before him. During the evening, over the cards, his absence of mind was like his father's slumbers. Finding him so unlike what he had been when he had believed himself in love with Camille, his mother recognized with a sort of terror the symptoms of a genuine passion, a thing altogether unknown in the old family home. Feverish irritability and constant dreaming made Calyste stupid. He would often sit for hours gazing at one figure in the tapestry. That morning she had advised him to go no more to les Touches, but to give up these two women.

"Not go to les Touches!" cried he.

"Nay, go, my dear, go; do not be angry, my darling," replied she, kissing his eyes, which had flashed flame at her.

In this state Calyste was within an ace of losing the fruits of Camille's skilled manœuvres by the Breton impetuosity of his love, which he could no longer master. In spite of his promises to Félicité, he vowed that he would see and speak to Béatrix. He wanted to read her eyes, to drown his gaze in their depths, to study the little details of her dress, to breathe its fragrance, to hear the music of her voice, follow the elegant deliberateness of her movements, embrace her figure in a glance—to contemplate her, in short, as a great general studies the field on which a decisive battle is to be fought. He wanted her, as lovers want; he was the prey of such desire as closed his ears, dulled his intellect, and threw him into a morbid condition, in which he no longer saw obstacles or distance, and was not even conscious of his body.

It struck him that he might go to les Touches before the hour agreed upon, hoping to find Béatrix in the garden. He knew that she walked there while waiting for breakfast. Mademoiselle des Touches and her friend had been in the morning to see the salt-marshes, and the basin with its shore of fine sand, into which the sea oozes, looking like a lake in the

midst of the sand-hills; they had come home, and were talking as they wandered about the yellow gravel paths in the garden.

"If this landscape interests you," said Camille, "you should go to le Croisic with Calyste. There are some very fine rocks there, cascades of granite, little bays with natural basins, wonders of capricious variety, and the seashore with thousands of fragments of marble, a whole world of amusement. You will see women *making wood,* that is to say, plastering masses of cow-dung against the wall to dry, and then piling them to keep, like peat in Paris; then in the winter they warm themselves by that fuel."

"And you will trust Calyste?" said the Marquise, laughing, in a tone which plainly showed that Camille, by sulking with Béatrix the night before, had obliged her to think of Calyste.

"Oh, my dear, when you know the angelic soul of a boy like him you will understand me. In him beauty is as nothing, you must know that pure heart, that guilelessness that is amazed at every step taken in the realm of love. What faith! what candor! what grace! The ancients had good reason to worship Beauty as holy.

"Some traveler, I forget who, tells us that horses in a state of freedom take the handsomest of them to be their leader. Beauty, my dear, is the genius of matter; it is the hall-mark set by Nature on her most perfect creations; it is the truest symbol, as it is the greatest chance. Did any one ever imagine a deformed angel? Do not they combine grace and strength? What has kept us standing for hours together before certain pictures in Italy, in which genius has striven for years to realize one of these caprices of nature? Come, with your hand on your conscience, was it not the ideal of beauty which we combined in our minds with moral grandeur? Well, and Calyste is one of those dreams made real; he has the courage of the lion, who remains quiet without suspecting his sovereignty. When he feels at his ease he is brilliant; I like his girlish diffidence. In his heart, my soul is refreshed after all the corruption, the ideas of science, literature, the world, politics,—all the futile accessories under which we stifle happiness. I

am now what I never was before—I am a child! I am sure of him, but I like to pretend jealousy; it makes him happy. Besides, it is part of my secret."

Béatrix walked on, silent and pensive; Camille was enduring unspoken martyrdom, and flashing side glances at her that looked like flames.

"Ah, my dear, you—you are happy," said Béatrix, leaning her hand on Camille's arm like a woman weary of some covert resistance.

"Yes! very happy!" replied poor Félicité, with savage bitterness.

The women sank on to a bench, both exhausted. No creature of her sex was ever subjected to more elaborate seduction or more clear-sighted Machiavelism than Madame de Rochefide had been during the last week.

"But I—I who see Conti's infidelities, who swallow them, who——"

"And why do you not give him up?" said Camille, discerning a favorable moment for striking a decisive blow.

"Can I?"

"Oh! poor child——"

They both sat stupidly gazing at a clump of trees.

"I will go and hasten breakfast," said Camille, "this walk has given me an appetite."

"Our conversation has taken away mine," said Béatrix.

Béatrix, a white figure in a morning dress, stood out against the green masses of foliage. Calyste, who had stolen into the garden through the drawing-room, turned down a path, walking slowly to meet the Marquise by chance, as it were; and Béatrix could not help starting a little when she saw him.

"How did I displease you yesterday, madame?" asked Calyste, after a few commonplace remarks had been exchanged.

"Why, you neither please me nor displease me," said she gently.

Her tone, her manner, her delightful grace encouraged Calyste.

"I am indifferent to you?" said he, in a voice husky with the tears that rose to his eyes.

"Must we not be indifferent to each other?" replied Béatrix. "Each of us has a sincere attachment——"

"Oh!" said Calyste eagerly, "I did love Camille; but I do not love her now."

"Then what do you do every day, all the morning long?" asked she, with a perfidious smile. "I cannot suppose that, in spite of her passion for tobacco, Camille prefers her cigar to you; or that, in spite of your admiration for authoresses, you spend four hours in reading novels by women."

"Then you know?" said the innocent boy, his face flushed with the joy of gazing at his idol

"Calyste!" cried Camille violently, as she appeared on the scene, seizing him by the arm and pulling him some steps; "Calyste, is this what you promised me?"

The Marquise heard this reproof, while Mademoiselle des Touches went off scolding, and leading away Calyste; she stood mystified by Calyste's avowal, and unable to understand it. Madame de Rochefide was not so clear-sighted as Claude Vignon. The truth of the terrible and sublime comedy performed by Camille is one of those parts of magnanimous infamy which a woman can conceive of only in the last extremity. It means a breaking heart, the end of her feelings as a woman, and the beginning of a sacrifice, which drags her down to hell or leads her to heaven.

During breakfast, to which Calyste was invited, Béatrix, whose feelings were lofty and proud, had already undergone a revulsion, stifling the germs of love that were sprouting in her heart. She was not hard or cold to Calyste, but her mild indifference wrung his heart. Félicité proposed that they should go on the next day but one to make an excursion through the strange tract of country lying between les Touches, le Croisic, and le Bourg de Batz. She begged Calyste to spend the morrow in finding a boat and some men, in case they should wish to go out by sea. She undertook to supply provisions, horses, and everything necessary to spare them any fatigue in this party of pleasure.

Béatrix cut her short by saying that she would not take the risk of running about the country. Calyste's face, which had expressed lively delight, was suddenly clouded.

"Why, what are you afraid of, my dear?" said Camille.

"My position is too delicate to allow of my compromising, not my reputation, but my happiness," she said with meaning, and she looked at the lad. "You know how jealous Conti is; if he knew——"

"And who is to tell him?"

"Will he not come back to fetch me?"

At these words Calyste turned pale. Notwithstanding Félicité's arguments, and those of the young Breton, Madame de Rochefide was inexorable, and showed what Camille called her obstinacy. Calyste, in spite of the hopes Félicité gave him, left les Touches in one of those fits of lovers' distress of which the violence often rises to the pitch of madness.

On his return home, Calyste did not quit his room till dinner-time, and went back again soon after. At ten o'clock his mother became uneasy, and went up to him; she found him writing in the midst of a quantity of torn papers and rough copy. He was writing to Béatrix, for he distrusted Camille; the Marquise's manner during their interview in the garden had encouraged him strangely.

Never did a first love-letter spring in a burning fount from the soul, as might be supposed. In all youths as yet uncorrupted, such a letter is produced with a flow too hotly effervescent not to be the elixir of several letters begun, rejected, and re-written.

Here is that sent by Calyste, which he read to his poor, astonished mother. To her, the old house was on fire; her son's love blazed up in it like the flare of a conflagration.

Calyste to Béatrix.

"Madame,—I loved you when as yet you were but a dream to me; imagine the fervor assumed by my love when I saw you. The dream was surpassed by the reality. My regret is

that I have nothing to tell you that you do not know, when I say how beautiful you are; still, perhaps your beauty never gave rise to so many feelings in any one as in me. You are beautiful in so many ways; I have studied you so thoroughly by thinking of you day and night, that I have penetrated the mystery of your personality, the secrets of your heart, and your misprized refinements. Have you ever been loved as you deserve?

"Let me tell you, then, that there is nothing in you which has not its interpretation in my heart: your pride answers to mine, the dignity of your looks, the grace of your mien, the elegance of your movements—everything in you is in harmony with the thoughts and wishes hidden in your secret soul; and it is because I can read them that I think myself worthy of you. If I had not become, within these few days, your second self, should I dare speak to you of myself? To read myself would be egotistic; it is you I speak of here, not Calyste.

"To write to you, Béatrix, I have set my twenty years aside; I have stolen a march on myself and aged my mind—or, perhaps, you have aged it by a week of the most horrible torments, caused, innocently indeed, by you. Do not take me for one of those commonplace lovers at whom you laugh with such good reason. What merit is there, indeed, in loving a young, beautiful, clever, noble woman! Alas, I cannot even dream of deserving you! What am I to you? A boy attracted by beauty and moral worth, as an insect is attracted by light. You cannot do anything else than trample on the flowers of my soul, yet all my happiness lies in seeing you spurn them under foot. Absolute devotion, unlimited faith, the maddest passion,—all these treasures of a true and loving heart are nothing; they help me to love, they cannot win love.

"Sometimes I wonder that such fervid fanaticism should fail to warm the idol; and when I meet your severe, cold eye, I feel myself turn to ice. Your disdain affects me then, and not my adoration. Why? You cannot possibly hate me so much as I love you; so ought the weaker feeling to get the mastery over the stronger?

"I loved Félicité with all the strength of my heart; I forgot her in a day, in an instant, on seeing you. She was a mistake, you are the truth. You, without knowing it, have wrecked my happiness, and you owe me nothing in exchange. I loved Camille without hope, and you give me no hopes; nothing is changed but the divinity. I was a Pagan, I am a Christian; that is all. Only, you have taught me to love—to be loved does not come till later. Camille says it is not love that loves only for a few days: the love that does not grow day by day is a contemptible passion; to continue growing, it must not foresee its end, and she could see the setting of our sun.

"On seeing you, I understood these sayings which I had struggled against with all my youth, all the rage of my desires, all the fierce despotism of my twenty years. Then our great and sublime Camille mingled her tears with mine. So I may love you on earth and in heaven, as we love God. If you loved me, you could not meet me with the reasoning by which Camille annihilated my efforts. We are both young, we can fly on the same wings, under the same sky, and never fear the storm that threatened that eagle.

"But what am I saying? I am carried far beyond the modesty of my hopes. You will cease to believe in the submission, the patience, the mute worship which I implore you not to wound needlessly. I know, Béatrix, that you cannot love me without falling in your own esteem. And I ask for no return.

"Camille said once that there was an innate fatality in names, as in her own. I felt this fatality in yours when on the pier at Guérande it struck my eyes on the seashore: you will come into my life as Beatrice came into Dante's. My heart will be the pedestal for a white statue—vindictive, jealous, and tyrannous. You are prohibited from loving me; you would endure a thousand deaths; you would be deceived, mortified, unhappy. There is in you a diabolical pride which binds you to the pillar you have laid hold on; you will perish while shaking the temple like Samson. I did not discover all these things; my love is too blind; Camille told me. Here

it is not my mind that speaks, but hers; I have no wits when you are in question, a tide of blood comes up from my heart, darkening my intellect with its waves, depriving me of my powers, paralyzing my tongue, making my knees quake and bend. I can only adore you, whatever you do. Camille calls your firmness obstinacy; I defend you; I believe it to be dictated by virtue. You are only all the more beautiful in my eyes. I know my fate; the pride of Brittany is a match for the woman who has made a virtue of hers.

"And so, dear Béatrix, be kind and comforting to me. When the victims were chosen, they were crowned with flowers; you owe me the garlands of compassion, and music for the sacrifice. Am I not the proof of your greatness, and will you not rise to the height of my love, scorned in spite of its sincerity, in spite of its undying fires?

"Ask Camille what my conduct has been since the day when she told me that she loved Claude Vignon. I was mute; I suffered in silence. Well, then, for you I could find yet greater strength, if you do not drive me to desperation, if you understand my heroism. One word of praise from you would enable me to bear the torments of martyrdom. If you persist in this cold silence, this deadly disdain, you will make me believe that I am to be feared. Oh, be to me all you can be —charming, gay, witty, affectionate. Talk to me of Gennaro as Camille did of Claude. I have no genius but that of love; there is nothing formidable in me, and in your presence I will behave as though I did not love you.

"Can you reject the prayer of such humble devotion, of a hapless youth who only asks that his sun should give him light and warm him? The man you love will always see you; poor Calyste has but a few days before him, you will soon be rid of him. So I may go to les Touches again to-morrow, may I not? You will not refuse my arm to guide you round the shores of le Croisic and le Bourg de Batz?—If you should not come, that will be an answer, and understood by Calyste."

There were four pages more of close small writing, in which Calyste explained the terrible threat contained in these last

words, by relating the story of his boyhood and life; but he told it in exclamatory phrases; there were many of those dots and dashes lavishly scattered through modern literature in perilous passages, like planks laid before the reader to enable him to cross the gulf. This artless picture would be a repetition of our narative: if it did not touch Madame de Rochefide, it could scarcely interest those who seek strong sensations; but it made his mother weep and say:

"Then you have not been happy?"

This terrible poem of feeling that had come like a storm on Calyste's heart, and was to be sent like a whirlwind to another, frightened the Baroness; it was the first time in her life that she had ever read a love-letter.

Calyste was standing up; there was one great difficulty; he did not know how to send his letter.

The Chevalier du Halga was still in the sitting-room, where they were playing off the last pool of a very lively *mouche*. Charlotte de Kergarouët, in despair at Calyste's indifference, was trying to charm the old people in the hope of thus securing her marriage. Calyste followed his mother, and came back into the room with the letter in his breast-pocket—it seemed to scorch his heart; he wandered about and up and down the room like a moth that had come in by mistake. At last the mother and son got Monsieur du Halga into the hall, whence they dismissed Mariotte and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's little servant.

"What do they want of the Chevalier?" said old Zéphirine to the other old maid.

"Calyste seems to me to be out of his mind," replied she. "He pays no more heed to Charlotte than if she were one of the marsh-girls."

The Baroness had very shrewdly supposed that the Chevalier du Halga must, somewhere about the year 1780, have sailed the seas of gallant adventure, and she advised Calyste to consult him.

"What is the best way to send a letter secretly to a lady?" said Calyste to the Chevalier in a whisper.

"You can give the note to her lady's-maid, with a few louis in her hand, for sooner or later the maid is in the secret, and it is best to let her know it from the first," replied the Chevalier, who could not suppress a smile; "but it is better to deliver it yourself."

"A few louis!" exclaimed the Baroness.

Calyste went away and fetched his hat; then he flew off to les Touches, and walked like an apparition into the little drawing-room, where he heard Béatrix and Camille talking. They were sitting on the divan, and seemed on the best possible terms. Calyste, with the sudden wit that love imparts, flung himself heedlessly on the divan by the Marquise, seized her hand, and pressed the letter into it, so that Félicité, watchful as she might be, could not see it done. Calyste's heart fluttered with an emotion that was at once acute and delightful, as he felt Béatrix's hand grasp his, and without even interrupting her sentence or seeming surprised, she slipped the letter into her glove.

"You fling yourself on a woman as if she were a divan," said she with a laugh.

"He has not, however, adopted the doctrine of the Turks!" said Félicité, who could not forbear from this retort.

Calyste rose, took Camille's hand, and kissed it; then he went to the piano and made every note sound in a long scale by running one finger over them. This glad excitement puzzled Camille, who told him to come to speak to her.

"What is it?" she asked in his ear.

"Nothing," said he.

"There is something between them," said Mademoiselle des Touches to herself.

The Marquise was impenetrable. Camille tried to make Calyste talk, hoping that he might betray himself; but the boy made an excuse of the uneasiness his mother would feel, and he left les Touches at eleven o'clock, not without having stood the fire of a piercing look from Camille, to whom he had never before made this excuse.

After the agitations of a night filled with Béatrix, after he

had been into the town twenty times in the course of the morning, in the hope of meeting the answer which did not come, the Marquise's maid came to the Hôtel du Guénic, and gave the following reply to Calyste, who went off to read it in the arbor at the end of the garden:—

Béatrix to Calyste.

"You are a noble boy, but you are a boy. You owe yourself to Camille, who worships you. You will not find in me either the perfections that distinguish her, or the happiness she lavishes on you. Whatever you may think, it is she who is young and I who am old; her heart is full of treasures, and mine is empty. She is devoted to you in a way you do not appreciate enough; she has no selfishness, and lives wholly in you. I should be full of doubts; I should drag you into a life that is weariful, ignoble, and spoiled by my own fault. Camille is free, she comes and goes at her will; I am a slave. In short, you forget that I love and am loved. The position in which I find myself ought to protect me against any homage. To love me, to tell me that you love me, is an insult. Would not a second lapse place me on the level of the most abandoned woman?

"You, who are young and full of delicate feeling, how can you compel me to say things which the heart cannot utter without being torn?

"I prefer the scandal of an irreparable disaster to the shame of perpetual deceit, my own ruin to the loss of my self-respect. In the eyes of many people whose esteem I value, I stand still high; if I should change, I should fall some steps lower. The world is still merciful to women whose constancy cloaks their illicit happiness, but it is pitiless to a vicious habit.

"I feel neither scorn nor anger; I am answering you with frank simplicity. You are young, you know nothing of the world, you are carried away by imagination, and, like all men of pure life, you are incapable of the reflections induced by disaster. I will go further: If I should be of all women the

most mortified; if I had horrible misery to hide; if I were deceived and deserted at last—and, thank God, nothing of that is possible—if, I say, by the vengeance of Heaven these things were, no one in the world would ever see me again. And then I could find it in me to kill the man who should speak to me of love, if a man could still find me where I should be. There you have the whole of my mind.

"Perhaps I have to thank you for having written to me. After your letter, and especially after my reply, I may be quite at my ease with you at les Touches, follow the bent of my humor, and be what you ask me to be. I say nothing of the bitter ridicule I should incur if my eyes should cease to express the sentiments of which you complain. To rob Camille a second time would be an evidence of weakness to which no woman could twice resign herself. If I loved you madly, if I were blind, if I were forgetful of everything else, I should always see Camille. Her love for you is a barrier too high to be crossed by any force, even with the wings of an angel; only demons would not recoil from such base treachery.

"In this, my child, lies a world of reasons which noble and refined women keep to themselves, of which you men know nothing, even when a man is so like a woman as you are at this moment.

"Finally, you have a mother who has shown you what a woman's life ought to be; pure and spotless, she has fulfilled her fate nobly; all I know of her has filled my eyes with tears of envy which has risen from the depths of my heart. I might have been like her! Calyste, this is what your wife ought to be; this what her life ought to be.

"I will not again cast you back maliciously, as I have done, on little Charlotte, who would bore you from the first, but on some exquisite girl who is worthy of you. If I gave myself to you, I should spoil your life. Either you would fail in faithfulness, in constancy, or you would resolve to devote your life to me: I will be honest—I should take it; I should carry you off I know not whither, far from the world; I should make you very unhappy; I am jealous. I see monsters in a drop of

water; I am in despair over odious trifles which many women put up with; there are even inexorable thoughts, originating in myself, not caused by you, which would wound me to death. When a man is not as respectful and as delicate in the tenth year of his happiness as he was on the eve of the day when he was a beggar for a favor, he seems to me a wretch, and degrades me in my own eyes. Such a lover no longer believes in the Amadis and Cyrus of my dreams. In our day love is purely mythical; and in you I find no more than the fatuity of a desire which knows not its end. I am not forty; I cannot yet bring my pride to bend to the authority of experience; I know not the love that could make me humble; in fact, I am a woman whose nature is still too youthful not to be detestable. I cannot answer for my moods; all my graciousness is on the surface. Perhaps I have not suffered enough yet to have acquired the indulgent ways, the perfect tenderness that we owe to cruel deceptions. Happiness has its impertinence, and I am very impertinent. Camille will always be your devoted slave, I should be an unreasonable tyrant.

"Indeed, is not Camille set by your side by your good angel, to guard you till you have reached the moment when you must start on the life that is in store for you, and which you must not fail in? I know Félicité! Her tenderness is inexhaustible; she may perhaps lack some of the graces of her sex, but she shows that vivifying strength, that genius for constancy, and that lofty courage which make everything acceptable. She will see you marry while suffering tortures; she will find you a free Béatrix, if Béatrix fulfils your ideal of woman and answers to your dreams; she will smooth out all the difficulties in your future life. The sale of a single acre of her land in Paris will redeem your estates in Brittany; she will make you her heir—has she not already adopted you as a son? And I, alas! What can I do for your happiness? Nothing.

"Do not be false to an immeasurable affection which has made up its mind to the duties of motherliness. To me she

seems most happy—this Camille! The admiration you feel for poor Béatrix is such a peccadillo as women of Camille's age view with the greatest indulgence. When they are sure of being loved they will allow constancy a little infidelity; nay, one of their keenest pleasures is triumph over the youth of their rivals.

"Camille is superior to other women, all this does not bear upon her; I only say it to reassure your conscience. I have studied Camille well; she is in my eyes one of the grandest figures of our time. She is both clever and kind, two qualities rarely united in a woman; she is generous and simple, two more great qualities seldom found together. I have seen trustworthy treasures in the depth of her heart; it would seem as though Dante had written for her in the *Paradiso* the beautiful lines on eternal happiness which she was interpreting to you the other evening, ending with *Senza brama sicura richezza.*

"She has talked to me of her fate in life, told me all her experience, and proved to me that love, the object of our desires and dreams, had always evaded her; I replied that she seemed to me a proof of that difficulty of matching anything sublime, which accounts for much unhappiness. Yours is one of the angelic souls whose sister-soul it seems impossible to find. This misfortune, dear child, is what Camille will spare you; even if she should die for it, she will find you a being with whom you may live happy as a husband.

"I offer you a friend's hand, and trust, not to your heart, but to your sense, to find that we are henceforth to each other a brother and sister, and to terminate our correspondence, which, between les Touches and Guérande, is odd, to say the least of it.

"Béatrix de Casteran."

The Baroness, in the highest degree excited by the details and progress of her son's love affairs with the beautiful Rochefide, could not sit still in the room, where she was

working at her cross-stitch, looking up at every stitch to watch Calyste; she rose from her chair and came up to him with a mixture of diffidence and boldness. The mother had all the graces of a courtesan about to ask a favor.

"Well?" said she, trembling, but not actually asking to see the letter.

Calyste showed it her in his hand, and read it aloud to her. The two noble souls, so simple and ingenuous, discovered in this astute and perfidious reply none of the treachery and snares infused into it by the Marquise.

"She is a noble and high-minded woman!" said the Baroness, whose eyes glistened with moisture. "I will pray to God for her. I never believed that a mother could desert her husband and child and preserve so much virtue. She deserves to be forgiven."

"Am I not right to worship her?" cried Calyste.

"But whither will this love lead you?" said his mother. "Oh! my child, how dangerous are these women of noble sentiments! Bad women are less to be feared.—Marry Charlotte de Kergarouët, and release two-thirds of the family estates. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël can achieve this great end by selling a few farms, and the good soul will devote herself to improving the property. You may leave your children a noble name, a fine fortune——"

"What, forget Béatrix?" said Calyste, in a hollow voice, his eyes fixed on the floor.

He left his mother, and went up to his room to reply to this letter.

Madame du Guénic had Madame de Rochefide's words stamped on her heart: she wanted to know on what Calyste founded his hopes. At about this hour the Chevalier would be exercising his dog on the Mall; the Baroness, sure of finding him there, put on a bonnet and shawl and went out. It was so extraordinary an event to see Madame du Guénic out, excepting at church, or in one of the two pretty alleys that were frequented on fête-days, when she would accompany her husband and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, that, within

two hours, every one was saying to every one else, "Madame du Guénic was out to-day; did you see her?" Thus before long the news came to Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's ears, and she said to her niece:

"Something very strange is happening at the du Guénics'."

"Calyste is madly in love with the beautiful Marquise de Rochefide," said Charlotte. "I should do better to leave Guérande and go back to Nantes."

At this moment the Chevalier du Halga, surprised at being sought out by the Baroness, had released Thisbe from her cord, recognizing the impossibility of attending to two ladies at once.

"Chevalier, you have had some experience in love affairs?" said the Baroness.

Captain du Halga drew himself up with not a little of the airs of a coxcomb. Madame du Guénic, without naming her son or the Marquise, told him the contents of the love letter, asking him what could be the meaning of such an answer. The Chevalier stood with his nose in the air caressing his chin; he listened with little grimaces; and at last he looked keenly at the Baroness.

"When a thoroughbred horse means to leap a fence, it goes up to it first to smell it and examine it," he said. "Calyste will be the happiest young rogue——"

"Hush!" said the Baroness

"I am dumb. In old times that was my only point," said the old man. "It is fine weather," he went on, after a pause, "the wind is northeasterly. By Heaven! how the *Belle-Poule* danced before that wind on the day—— But," he went on, interrupting himself, "I have a singing in my ears, and pains in the false-ribs; the weather will change.—You know that the fight of the *Belle-Poule* was so famous that ladies wore caps *à la Belle-Poule.* Madame de Kergarouët was the first to appear at the opera in such a head-dress. 'You are dressed for conquest,' I said to her. The words were repeated in every box."

The Baroness listened politely to the old man, who, faith-

ful to the laws of old-world etiquette, escorted her back to the little street, neglecting Thisbe. He let out the secret of Thisbe's birth. She was the granddaughter of that sweet Thisbe that had belonged to Madame la Comtesse de Kergarouët, the Admiral's first wife. This Thisbe the third was eighteen years old.

The Baroness ran lightly up to Calyste's room, as gleeful as if she were in love herself. Calyste was not there, but Fanny saw a letter on the table addressed to Madame de Rochefide, folded, but not sealed. Irresistible curiosity prompted the anxious mother to read her son's answer. The indiscretion was cruelly punished; she felt horrible anguish when she saw the precipice towards which love was driving Calyste.

Calyste to Béatrix.

"What do I care for the family of du Guénic in such times as we live in, dearest Béatrix! My name is Béatrix, the happiness of Béatrix is my happiness, her life is my life, and all my fortune is in her heart. Our lands have been in pledge these two hundred years, and may remain so for two hundred more; our farmers have them, no one can take them away. To see and love you! That is my religion.

"Marry! The idea has made me heartsick. Are there two such as Béatrix? I will marry no one but you; I will wait twenty years if I must; I am young, and you will always be beautiful. My mother is a saint, and it is not for me to judge her. She never loved! I know now how much she has lost, and what sacrifices she has made. You, Béatrix, have taught me to love my mother better; she dwells in my heart with you—there will never be any one else; she is your only rival. Is not this as much as to say that no one shares your throne? So your reassuring letter has no effect on my mind.

"As to Camille, you have only to give me a hint, and I will beg her to tell you herself that I do not love her; she is the mother of my intelligence; nothing more, nothing

less. As soon as I saw you, she became a sister to me, my friend—my man friend—what you will; but we have no claims on each other beyond those of friendship. I thought she was a woman till the moment when I first saw you. But you show me that Camille is a man; she swims, hunts, rides; she smokes and drinks; she writes, she can analyze a book or a heart; she has not the smallest weakness; she walks on in her strength; she has not your free grace, your step like the flight of a bird, your voice—the voice of love—your arch looks, your gracious demeanor. She is Camille Maupin; and nothing else; she has nothing of the woman about her, and you have everything that I love in woman; I felt from the day when I first saw you that you were mine.

"You will laugh at this feeling, but it has gone on increasing; it strikes me as monstrous that we should be divided; you are my soul, my life, and I cannot live where you are not. Let me love you! We will fly, we will go far, far from the world, into some country where you will know nobody, and where you will have no one but me and God in your heart. My mother, who loves you, will come some day to live with us. Ireland has many country houses, and my mother's family will surely lend us one. Great God! Let us be off! A boat, some sailors, and we shall be there before any one can guess whither we have fled from the world you dread so greatly.

"You have never been loved; I feel it as I re-read your letter, and I fancy I can perceive that if none of the reasons of which you speak existed you would allow yourself to be loved by me. Béatrix, a holy love will wipe out the past.

"Is it possible in your presence to think of anything but you? Oh! I love you so much that I could wish you a thousand times disgraced, so as to prove to you the power of my love by adoring you as if you were the holiest of creatures. You call my love for you an insult. Oh, Béatrix, you do not think that! The love of a 'noble' child—you call me so—would do honor to a queen.

"So to-morrow we will wander lover-like along by the rocks

and the sea, and you shall tread the sands of old Brittany and consecrate them anew for me. Give me that day of joy, and the transient alms—leaving perhaps, alas! no trace on your memory—will be a perennial treasure to Calyste——"

The Baroness dropped the letter unfinished; she knelt on a chair and put up a silent prayer to God, imploring Him to preserve her son's wits, to deliver him from madness and error, and snatch him back from the ways in which she saw him rushing.

"What are you doing, mother?" said Calyste's voice.

"Praying for you," she replied, looking at him with eyes full of tears. "I have been so wrong as to read this letter.—My Calyste is gone mad."

"It is the sweetest form of madness," said the youth, kissing his mother.

"I should like to see this woman, my child."

"Well, mamma, we shall take a boat to-morrow to cross over to le Croisic; come to the jetty."

He sealed his letter and went off to les Touches. The thing which above all others appalled the Baroness was to see that, by sheer force of instinct, feeling could acquire the insight of consummate experience. Calyste had written to Béatrix as he might have done under the guidance of Monsieur du Halga.

One of the greatest joys, perhaps, that a small mind can know is that of duping a great soul and catching it in a snare. Béatrix knew herself to be very inferior to Camille Maupin. This inferiority was not merely in the sum-total of intellectual qualities known as talent, but also in those qualities of the heart that are called passion. At the moment when Calyste arrived at les Touches, with the impetuous haste of first love borne on the pinions of hope, the Marquise was conscious of keen satisfaction in knowing herself to be loved by this charming youth She did not go so far as to wish to be his accomplice in this feeling; she made it

a point of heroism to repress this *capriccio*, as the Italians say, and fancied she would thus be on a par with her friend; she was happy to be able to make her some sacrifice. In short, the vanities peculiar to a Frenchwoman, which constitute the famous *coquetterie* whence she derives her superiority, were in her flattered and amply satisfied: she was tempted by the utmost seduction, and she resisted it; her virtues sang a sweet concert of praise in her ear.

The two women, apparently indolent, were lounging on the divan in that little drawing-room so full of harmony, in the midst of a world of flowers, with the window open, for the north winds had ceased to blow. A melting southerly breeze dimpled the salt-water lake that they could see in front of them, and the sun scorched the golden sands. Their spirits were as deeply tossed as Nature lay calm, and not less burning. Camille, broken on the wheel of the machinery she was working, was obliged to keep a guard over herself, the friendly foe she had admitted into her cage was so prodigiously keen; not to betray her secret she gave herself up to observing the secrets of nature; she cheated her pain by seeking a meaning in the motions of the spheres, and found God in the sublime solitude of the sky.

When once an infidel acknowledges God, he throws himself headlong into Catholicism, which, viewed as a system, is perfect.

That morning Camille had shown the Marquise a face still radiant with the light of her research, carried on during a night spent in lamentation. Calyste was always before her like a heavenly vision. She regarded this beautiful youth, to whom she devoted herself, as her guardian angel. Was it not he who was leading her to the supernal regions where sufferings have an end under the weight of incomprehensible immensity? Still, Camille was made uneasy by Béatrix's triumphant looks. One woman does not gain such an advantage over another without allowing it to be guessed, while justifying herself for having taken it. Nothing could be stranger than this covert moral struggle between the two

friends, each hiding a secret from the other, and each believing herself to be the creditor for unspoken sacrifices.

Calyste arrived holding his letter under his glove, ready to slip it into Béatrix's hand. Camille, who had not failed to mark the change in her guest's manner, affected not to look at her, but studied her in a mirror just when Calyste made his entrance. That is the sunken rock for every woman. The cleverest and the most stupid, the most frank and the most astute, are not then mistress of their secret; at that moment it blazes out to another woman's eyes. Too much reserve or too much freedom, an open and a beaming glance, or a mysterious droop of the eyelids—everything then reveals the feeling above all others difficult to conceal, for indifference is so absolutely cold that it can never be well acted. Women have the genius of shades of manner—they use them too often not to know them all—and on these occasions they take in a rival from head to foot at a glance; they see the slightest twitch of a foot under a petticoat, the most imperceptible start in the figure, and know the meaning of what to a man seems to have none. Two women watching one another play one of the finest comedies to be seen.

"Calyste has committed some folly," thought Camille, observing in both of them the indefinable look of persons who understand each other.

There was no formality or affected indifference in the Marquise now; she looked at Calyste as if he belonged to her. Calyste explained matters; he reddened like a guilty creature, like a happy lover. He had just settled everything for their excursion on the morrow.

"Then you are really going, my dear?" said Camille.

"Yes," said Béatrix.

"How did you know that?" said Mademoiselle des Touches to Calyste.

"I have come to ask," he replied, at a glance shot at him by Madame de Rochefide, who did not wish her friend to have any suspicion of their correspondence.

"They have already come to an understanding," said Ca-

mille to herself, catching this look by a side-glance from the corner of her eye. "It is all over; there is nothing left to me but to disappear."

And under the pressure of this thought, a deathlike change passed over her face that gave Béatrix a chill.

"What is the matter, dear?" said she.

"Nothing.—Then, Calyste, will you send on my horses and yours, so that we may find them ready on the other side of le Croisic and ride back through le Bourg de Batz? We will breakfast at le Croisic and dine here. You will undertake to find boatmen. We will start at half-past eight in the morning.—Such fine scenery!" she added to Béatrix. "You will see Cambremer, a man who is doing penance on a rock for having murdered his son. Oh! you are in a primitive land where men do not feel like the common herd. Calyste will tell you the story."

She went into her room; she was stifling. Calyste delivered his letter and followed Camille.

"Calyste, she loves you, I believe; but you are hiding something; you have certainly disobeyed my injunctions."

"She loves me!" said he, dropping into a chair.

Camille looked out at the door. Béatrix had vanished. This was strange. A woman does not fly from a room where the man is whom she loves and whom she is certain to see again, unless she has something better to do. Mademoiselle des Touches asked herself, "Can she have a letter from Calyste?" But she thought the innocent lad incapable of such audacity.

"If you have disobeyed me, all is lost by your own fault," said she gravely. "Go and prepare for the joys of to-morrow."

She dismissed him with a gesture which Calyste could not rebel against. There are silent sorrows that are despotically eloquent. As he went to le Croisic to find the boatmen, Calyste had some qualms of fear. Camille's speech bore a stamp of doom that revealed the foresight of a mother.

Four hours later, when he returned, very tired, counting

on dinner at les Touches, he was met at the door by Camille's maid, who told him that her mistress and the Marquise could not see him this evening. Calyste was surprised, and wanted to question the maid, but she shut the door and vanished.

Six o'clock was striking by the clocks of Guérande. Calyste went home, asked for some dinner, and then played *mouche,* a prey to gloomy meditations. These alternations of joy and grief, the overthrow of his hopes following hard upon what seemed the certainty that he was loved, crushed the young soul that had been soaring heavenward to the sky, and had risen so high that the fall must be tremendous.

"What ails you, my Calyste?" his mother whispered to him.

"Nothing," said he, looking at her with eyes whence the light of his soul and the flame of love had died out.

It is not hope, but despair, that gives the measure of our ambitions. We give ourselves over in secret to the beautiful poems of hope, while grief shows itself unveiled.

"Calyste, you are not at all nice," said Charlotte, after vainly wasting on him those little provincial teasing ways which always degenerate into annoyance.

"I am tired," he said, rising and bidding the party good-night.

"Calyste is much altered," said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"*We* haven't fine gowns covered with lace; we don't flourish our sleeves like this; we don't sit so, or know how to look on one side and wriggle our heads," said Charlotte, imitating and caricaturing the Marquise's airs and attitude and looks. "We haven't a voice with a squeak in the head, or a little interesting cough, *heugh! heugh!* like the sigh of a ghost; we are so unfortunate as to have robust health and be fond of our friends without any nonsense; when we look at them we do not seem to be stabbing them with a dart, or examining them with a hypocritical glance. We don't know how to droop our heads like a weeping willow, and appear quite affable merely by raising it, so!"

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël could not help laughing at her niece's performance; but neither the Chevalier nor the Baron understood this satire of the country on Paris.

"But the Marquise de Rochefide is very handsome," said the old lady.

"My dear," said the Baroness to her husband, "I happen to know that she is going to-morrow to le Croisic; we will walk down there. I should very much like to meet her."

While Calyste was racking his brain to divine why the door of les Touches should have been closed in his face, a scene was taking place between the two friends which was to have its effect on the events of the morrow. Calyste's letter had given birth to unknown emotions in Madame de Rochefide's heart. A woman is not often the object of a passion so youthful, so guileless, so sincere and absolute as was this boy's. Béatrix had loved more than she had been loved. After being a slave she felt an unaccountable longing to be the tyrant in her turn.

In the midst of her joy, as she read and re-read Calyste's letter, a cruel thought pierced her like a stab. What had Calyste and Camille been about together since Claude Vignon's departure? If Calyste did not love Camille, and Camille knew it, what did they do in those long mornings? The memory of her brain insidiously compared this remark with all Camille had said. It was as though a smiling devil held up before her, as in a mirror, the portrait of her heroic friend, with certain looks, certain gestures, which finally enlightened Béatrix. Far from being Félicité's equal, she was crushed by her; far from deceiving her, it was she who was deceived; she herself was but a toy that Camille wanted to give the child she loved with an extraordinary and never vulgar passion.

To a woman like Béatrix this discovery was a thunderbolt. She recalled every detail of the past week. In an instant Camille's part and her own lay before her in their fullest development; she saw herself strangely abased. In the rush of her jealous hatred she fancied she detected in Camille some plot of revenge on Conti. All the events of the past two years had perhaps led up to these two weeks. Once started on the downward slope of suspicions, hypotheses, and anger,

Béatrix did not check herself; she walked up and down her rooms, spurred by impulses of passion, or, sitting down now and again, tried to make a plan; still, until the dinner-hour she remained a prey to indecision, and only went down when dinner was served without changing her dress.

On seeing her rival come in, Camille guessed everything. Béatrix, in morning dress, had a cold look and an expression of reserve, which to an observer so keen as Camille betrayed the animosity of embittered feelings. Camille immediately left the room and gave the order that had so greatly astonished Calyste; she thought that if the guileless lad, with his insane adoration, came into the middle of the quarrel he might never see Béatrix again, and compromise the future of his passion by some foolish bluntness. She meant to fight out this duel of dupery without any witness. Béatrix, with no one to uphold her, must certainly yield. Camille knew how shallow her soul was, and how mean her pride, to which she had justly given the name of obstinacy.

The dinner was gloomy. Both the women had too much spirit and good taste to have any explanation before the servants, or when they might listen at the doors. Camille was gentle and kind; she felt herself so much the superior! The Marquise was hard and biting; she knew she was being fooled like a child. There was, all through dinner, a warfare of looks, shrugs, half-spoken words, to which the servants could have no clue, but which gave warning of a terrible storm. When they were going upstairs again Camille mischievously offered Béatrix her arm; the Marquise affected not to see, and rushed forward alone. As soon as coffee was served, Mademoiselle des Touches said to her servant, "You can go," and this was the signal for battle.

"The romances you act out, my dear, are rather more dangerous than those you write," said the Marquise.

"They have, however, one great merit," said Camille, taking a cigarette.

"What is that?" asked Béatrix.

"They are unpublished, my angel."

"Will that in which you have plunged me make a book?"

"I have no genius for the task of Œdipus; you have the wit and beauty of the Sphinx, I know, but do not ask me any riddles; speak out, my dear Béatrix."

"When, in order to make men happy, to amuse them, please them, dispel their annoyances, we appeal to the devil to help us——"

"The men blame us afterwards for our endeavor, and believe it to be dictated by a spirit of depravity," said Camille, taking her cigarette from her lips to interrupt her friend.

"They forget the love which carried us away, and which justified our excesses—for whither may we not be carried?—But they are only playing out their part as men, they are ungrateful and unjust," said Béatrix. "Women know each other; they know how truly lofty and noble their attitude is under all circumstances—nay, I may say how virtuous.

"Still, Camille, I have begun to perceive the truth of certain remarks I have heard you complain of. Yes, my dear, there is something of the man in you; you behave like men; nothing checks you; and if you have not all their merits, your mind conducts itself like theirs, and you share their contempt for us women. I have no reason to be pleased with you, my dear, and I am too frank to conceal the fact. Nobody, perhaps, will ever inflict so deep a wound on my heart as that I am now suffering from. Though you are not always a woman in love matters, you become one again in revenge. Only a woman of genius could have discovered the tenderest spot in our delicate sentiments—I am speaking of Calyste, and of the trickery, my dear, for that is the right word, that you have employed against me. How low you have fallen, you, Camille Maupin; and to what end?"

"Still and still more the sphinx," said Camille, smiling.

"You wanted to make me throw myself at Calyste's head; I am still too young for such doings. To me love is love, with its intolerable jealousy and despotic demands. I am not a writer; it is not possible to me to find ideas in feelings——"

"You think yourself capable of loving foolishly?" Camille asked her. "Be quite easy, you still have all your wits about you. You malign yourself, my dear; you are cold enough for your head always to remain supreme judge of the achievements of your heart."

This epigram brought the color to the Marquise's face; she shot a look full of hatred, an envenomed look, at Camille; and at once, without stopping to choose them, let fly all the sharpest arrows in her quiver. Camille, smoking her cigarette, listened calmly to this furious attack, bristling with such virulent abuse that it is impossible to record it. Béatrix, provoked by her adversary's imperturbable manner, fell back on odious personalities and Mademoiselle des Touches' age.

"Is that all?" asked Camille, blowing a cloud of smoke. "Are you in love with Calyste?"

"Certainly not."

"So much the better," replied Camille. "I am, and far too much for my happiness. He has, no doubt, a fancy for you. You are the loveliest *blonde* in the world, and I am as brown as a mole; you are slim and slender, my figure is too dignified. In short, you are young; that is the great fact, and you have not spared me. You have made an abuse of your advantages over me as a woman, neither more nor less than as a comic paper makes an abuse of humor. I have done all in my power to prevent what is now inevitable," and she raised her eyes to the ceiling. "However little I may seem to be a woman, I still have enough of the woman in me for a rival to need my help in order to triumph over me!" This cruel speech, uttered with an air of perfect innocence, went to the Marquise's heart. "You must think me a very idiotic person if you believe all that Calyste tries to make you believe about me. I am neither lofty nor mean; I am a woman, and very much a woman. Throw off your airs and give me your hand," said Camille, taking possession of Béatrix's hand. "You do not love Calyste, that is the truth—is it not? Then do not get in a rage! Be stern with him to-morrow, cold and hard, and he will end by submitting after the scolding I shall give

him, for I have not exhausted the resources of our arsenal, and, after all, pleasure always gets the better of desire.

"But Calyste is a Breton. If he persists in paying you his addresses, tell me honestly, and you can go at once to a little country-house of mine at six leagues from Paris, where you will find every comfort, and where Conti can join you. If Calyste slanders me! Why, good heavens! The purest love lies six times a day; its illusions prove its strength."

There was a proud coldness in Camille's expression that made the Marquise uneasy and afraid. She did not know what answer to make.

Camille struck the final blow.

"I am more trusting and less bitter than you," she went on. "I do not imagine that you intended to hide under recrimination an attack which would imperil my life; you know me; I should not survive the loss of Calyste, and I must lose him sooner or later. But, indeed, Calyste loves me, and I know it."

"Here is his answer to a letter from me in which I wrote only of you," said Béatrix, holding out Calyste's letter.

Camille took it and read it. As she read, her eyes filled with tears; she wept, as all women weep in acute suffering.

"Good God!" said she. "He loves her. Then I must die without ever having been understood or loved!"

She sat for some minutes with her head resting on her friend's shoulder; her pain was genuine; she felt in her own soul the same terrible blow that Madame du Guénic had received on reading this letter.

"Do you love him?" said she, sitting up and looking at Béatrix. "Do you feel for him that infinite devotion which triumphs over all suffering, and survives scorn, betrayal, even the certainty of never being loved again? Do you love him for himself, for the very joy of loving?"

"My dearest friend!" said the Marquise, much moved. "Well, be content, I will leave to-morrow."

"Do not go away; he loves you, I see it! And I love him so well that I should be in despair if I saw him miserable

and unhappy. I had dreamed of many things for him; but if he loves you, that is all at an end."

"Yes, Camille, I love him," said the Marquise with delightful simplicity, but coloring.

"You love him, and you can resist him!" cried Camille. "No, you do not love him!"

"I do not know what new virtues he has aroused in me, but he has certainly made me ashamed of myself," said Béatrix. "I could wish to be virtuous and free, so as to have something else to sacrifice to him besides the remnants of a heart and disgraceful bonds. I will not accept an incomplete destiny either for him or for myself."

"Cold brain! it can love and calculate!" cried Camille, with a sort of horror.

"Whatever you please, but I will not blight his life or be a stone round his neck, an everlasting regret. As I cannot be his wife, I will not be his mistress. He has—you will not laugh at me? No?—Well, then, his beautiful love has purified me."

Camille gave Béatrix a look—the wildest, fiercest look that ever a jealous woman flung at her rival.

"On that ground," said she, "I fancied I stood alone. Béatrix, that speech has parted us for ever; we are no longer friends. We are at the beginning of a hideous struggle. Now, I tell you plainly, you must succumb or fly."

Félicité rushed away into her own room after showing to Béatrix, who was amazed, a face like an infuriated lioness.

"Are you coming to le Croisic to-morrow?" said Camille, lifting the curtain.

"Certainly," said the Marquise, loftily; "I will not fly—nor will I succumb."

"I play with my hand on the table," retorted Camille; "I shall write to Conti."

Béatrix turned as white as her gauze scarf.

"For each of us life is at stake," replied Béatrix, who did not know what to decide on.

The violent passions to which this scene had given rise be-

tween the two women subsided during the night. They both reasoned with themselves, and came back to a reliance on the perfidious temporizing which fascinates most women—an excellent system between them and men, but a bad one between woman and woman. It was in the midst of this last storm that Mademoiselle des Touches heard the great voice which dominates even the bravest. Béatrix listened to the counsels of worldly wisdom; she feared the contempt of society. So Félicité's last masterstroke, weighted with the accents of intense jealousy, was perfectly successful. Calyste's blunder was remedied, but any fresh mistake might ruin his hopes for ever.

The month of August was drawing to a close, the sky was magnificently clear. On the horizon the ocean, like a southern sea, had a hue as of molten silver, and fluttered to the strand in sparkling ripples. A sort of glistening vapor, produced by the sun's rays falling directly on the sand, made an atmosphere at least equal to that of the tropics. The salt blossomed into little white stars on the surface of the salt-pans. The laborious marshmen, dressed in white on purpose to defy the heat of the sun, were at their post by daybreak armed with their long rakes, some leaning against the mud-walls dividing the plots, and watching this process of natural chemistry, familiar to them from their infancy; others playing with their little ones and wives. Those green dragons called excise-men smoked their pipes in peace. There was something Oriental in the picture, and certainly a Parisian, suddenly dropped there, would not have believed that he was in France.

The Baron and Baroness, who had made a pretext of their wish to see how the salt-raking was going on, were on the jetty, admiring the silent scene, where no sound was to be heard but the sea moaning with regular rhythm, where boats cut through the water, and the green belt of cultivated land was all the more lovely in its effect because it is so uncommon on the desert shores of the ocean.

"Well, my friends, I shall have seen the marshes of Guérande once more before I die," said the Baron to the marshmen, who stood in groups at the fringe of the marsh to greet him.

"As if the du Guénics died!" said one of the men.

At this moment the little party from les Touches came down the narrow road. The Marquise led the way alone, Calyste and Camille followed arm-in-arm. About twenty yards behind them came Gasselin.

"There are my father and mother," said Calyste to Camille.

The Marquise stopped. Madame du Guénic felt the most vehement repulsion at the sight of Béatrix, though she was dressed to advantage, in a broad-brimmed Leghorn hat trimmed with blue cornflowers, her hair waved beneath it; a dress of gray linen stuff, and a blue sash with long ends; in short, the garb of a princess disguised as a shepherdess.

"She has no heart!" said Fanny to herself.

"Mademoiselle," said Calyste to Camille, "here are Madame du Guénic and my father."

Then he added to his parents:

"Mademoiselle des Touches and Madame la Marquise de Rochefide, *née* de Casteran—my father."

The Baron bowed to Mademoiselle des Touches, who bowed with an air of humble gratitude to the Baroness.

"She," thought Fanny, "really loves my boy; she seems to be thanking me for having brought him into the world."

"You, like me, are come to see if the yield is good; but you have more reasons than I for curiosity, mademoiselle," said the Baron to Camille, "for you have property here."

"Mademoiselle is the richest owner of them all," said one of the marshmen; "and God preserve her, for she is a very good lady!"

The two parties bowed and went their way.

"You would never suppose Mademoiselle des Touches to be more than thirty," said the good man to his wife. "She is very handsome. And Calyste prefers that jade of a Parisian Marquise to that good daughter of Brittany?"

"Alas, yes!" said the Baroness.

A boat was lying at the end of the jetty; they got in, but not in high spirits. Béatrix was cold and dignified. Camille had scolded Calyste for his disobedience, and explained to him the position of his love affair. Calyste, sunk in gloomy despair, cast eyes at Béatrix, in which love and hatred struggled for the upper hand.

Not a word was spoken during the short passage from the jetty of Guérande to the extreme point of the harbor of le Croisic, the spot where the salt is shipped, being brought down to the shore by women in large earthen pans, which they carry on their heads, holding them in such a way as to look like caryatides. These women are barefoot, and wear a very short skirt. Many of them leave the kerchief that covers their shoulders to fly loose, and several wear only a shift, and are the proudest, for the less clothes they wear the more they display their modest beauties.

The little Danish bark was taking in her cargo. Thus the landing of these two beautiful ladies excited the curiosity of the salt-carriers; and partly to escape them, as well as to do Calyste a service, Camille hurried on towards the rocks, leaving him with Béatrix. Gasselin lingered at least two hundred yards behind his master.

On the seaward side the peninsula of le Croisic is fringed with granite rocks so singularly grotesque in form that they can only be appreciated by travelers who are able from experience to make comparisons between the different grand spectacles of wild nature. The rocks of le Croisic have, perhaps, the same superiority over other similar scenes that the road to the Grande Chartreuse is admitted to have over other narrow gorges. Neither the Corsican shore, where the granite forms very remarkable reefs, nor that of Sardinia, where nature has revelled in grand and terrible effects, nor the basaltic formations of northern seas, have quite so distinctive a character. Fancy seems to have disported itself there in endless arabesques, where the most grotesque shapes mingle or stand forth. Every form may be seen there. Imagination may, perhaps, be weary of this vast collection of monsters,

among which, in furious weather, the sea rushes in, and has at last polished down all the rough edges.

Under a natural vault, arched with a boldness only faintly imitated by Brunelleschi—for the greatest efforts of art are but a timid counterpart of some work of nature—you will find a basin polished like a marble bath, and strewn with smooth, fine white sand, in which you may bathe in safety in four feet of tepid water. As you walk on you admire the cool little creeks, under shelter of porticoes rough-hewn but stately, like those of the Pitti palace—another imitation of the freaks of nature. The variety is infinite; nothing is lacking that the most extravagant fancy could invent or wish for.

There is even a large shrub of box,* a thing so rare on the shore of the Atlantic that perhaps this is the only specimen. This box-shrub, the greatest curiosity in le Croisic, where trees cannot grow, is at about a league from the port, on the utmost headland of the coast. On one of the promontories formed by the granite, rising so high above the sea that the waves cannot reach it even in the wildest storms, and facing the south, the floods have worn a hollow shelf about four feet deep. In this cleft, chance, or perhaps man, has deposited soil enough to enable a box, sown by some bird, to grow thick and closely shorn. The gnarled roots would indicate an age of at least three hundred years. Below it the rock falls sheer.

Some shock, of which the traces are stamped in indelible characters on this coast, has swept off the fragments of granite I know not whither. The sea comes, without breaking over any shoals, to the bottom of this cliff, where the water is more than five hundred feet deep. On either hand some reefs, just beneath the surface, form a sort of large *cirque,* traceable by the foaming breakers. It needs some courage and resolution to climb to the top of this little Gibraltar; its cap is almost spherical, and a gust of wind might carry the inquirer into the sea, or, which would be worse, on to

* *Buis,* "whence (says Balzac) the word *buisson,*" shrub or bush.

the rocks below. This giant sentinel is like the lantern towers of old châteaux, whence miles of country could be scanned and attacks guarded against; from its height are seen the steeple and the thrifty fields of le Croisic, the sand-hills that threaten to encroach on the arable land, and which have invaded the neighborhood of le Bourg de Batz. Some old men declare that there was, long ago, a castle on this spot. The sardine fishers have a name for this headland, which can be seen from afar at sea; but I must be forgiven for having forgotten that Breton name, as hard to pronounce as it is to remember.

Calyste led Béatrix towards this height, whence the view is superb, and where the forms of the granite surpass all the surprises they can have caused along the sandy margin of the shore.

It is vain to explain why Camille had hurried on in front; like a wounded animal, she longed for solitude; she lost herself in the grottoes, reappeared on the boulders, chased the crabs out of their holes, or discovered them in the very act of their eccentric behavior. Not to be inconvenienced by her women's skirts, she had put on Turkish trousers with embroidered frills, a short blouse, and a felt hat; and, by way of a traveler's staff, she carried a riding-whip, for she was always vain of her strength and agility. Thus attired, she was a hundred times handsomer than Béatrix; she had tied a little red China silk shawl across her bosom and knotted behind, as we wrap a child. For some little time Béatrix and Calyste saw her flitting over rocks and rifts like a will-o'-the-wisp, trying to stultify grief by facing perils.

She was the first to arrive at the box cliff, and sat down in the shade of one of the clefts, lost in meditation. What could such a woman as she do in old age, after drinking the cup of fame which all great talents, too greedy to sip the dull driblets of vanity, drain at one draught? She has since confessed that then and there, one of the coincidences suggested by a mere trifle, by one of the accidents which count for nothing with ordinary people, though they open a gulf of meditation

to a great soul, brought her to a decision as to the strange deed, which was afterwards the close of her social career. She drew out of her pocket a little box in which she had brought, in case of thirst, some strawberry pastilles; she ate several; but as she sucked them, she could not help reflecting that the strawberries, which were no more, yet lived by their qualities. Hence she concluded that it might be the same with us. The sea offered her an image of the infinite. No great mind can get away from the infinite, granting the immortality of the soul, without being brought to infer some religious future. This idea still haunted her when she smelt at her scent-bottle of Eau de Portugal.

Her manœuvres for handing Béatrix over to Calyste then struck her as very sordid; she felt the woman die in her, and she emerged the noble angelic being hitherto veiled in the flesh. Her vast intellect, her learning, her acquirements, her spurious loves had brought her face to face with what? Who could have foretold it? With the yearning mother, the consoler of the sorrowing—the Roman Church, so mild towards repentance, so poetical to poets, so artless with children, so deep and mysterious to wild and anxious spirits, that they can for ever plunge deeper into it and still satisfy their inextinguishable curiosity, which is constantly excited.

She glanced back at the devious ways to which she had been led by Calyste, comparing them to the tortuous paths among these rocks. Calyste was still in her eyes the lovely messenger from heaven, a divine leader. She smothered earthly in sacred love.

After walking on for some time in silence, Calyste, at an exclamation from Béatrix at the beauty of the ocean, very different from the Mediterranean, could not resist drawing a comparison between that sea and his love, in its purity and extent, its agitations, its depth, its eternity.

"It has a rock for its shore," said Béatrix with a laugh.

"When you speak to me in that tone," replied he with a heavenly flash, "I see you and hear you, and I can find an angel's patience; but when I am alone, you would pity me if you could see me. My mother cries over my grief."

"Listen, Calyste, this must come to an end," said the Marquise, stepping down on to the sandy path. "Perhaps we are now in the one propitious spot for the utterance of such things, for never in my life have I seen one where nature was more in harmony with my thoughts. I have seen Italy, where everything speaks of love; I have seen Switzerland, where all is fresh and expressive of true happiness, laborious happiness, where the verdure, the calm waters, the most placid outlines are overpowered by the snow-crowned Alps; but I have seen nothing which more truly paints the scorching barrenness of my life than this little plain, withered by sea-gales, corroded by salt mists, where melancholy tillage struggles in the face of the immense ocean and under the hedgerows of Brittany, whence rise the towers of your Guérande.

"Well, Calyste, that is Béatrix. Do not attach yourself to that. I love you, but I will never be yours, for I am conscious of my inward desolation. Ah! you can never know how cruel I am to myself when I tell you this. No, you shall never see your idol—if I am your idol—stoop; it shall not fall from the height where you have set it. I have now a horror of a passion which the world and religion alike reprobate; I will be humbled no more, nor will I steal happiness. I shall remain where I am; I shall be the sandy, unfertile desert, without verdure or flowers, which lies before you."

"And if you should be deserted?" said Calyste.

"Then I should go and beg for mercy. I would humble myself before the man I have sinned against, but I would never run the risk of rushing into happiness which I know would end."

"End?" cried Calyste.

"End," repeated the Marquise, interrupting the rhapsody into which her lover was plunging, by a tone which reduced him to silence.

This contradiction gave rise in the youth's soul to one of those wordless rages which are known only to those who have loved without hope. He and Béatrix walked on for about three hundred yards in utter silence, looking neither at the sea, nor the rocks, nor the fields of le Croisic.

"I should make you so happy!" said Calyste.

"All men begin by promising us happiness, and they bequeath to us shame, desertion, disgust. I have nothing of which to accuse the man to whom I ought to be faithful; he made me no promises; I went to him. But the only way to make my fault less is to make it eternal."

"Say at once, madame, that you do not love me! I who love you, know by myself that love does not argue, it sees nothing but itself, there is no sacrifice I could not make for it. Command me, and I will attempt the impossible. The man who, of old, scorned his mistress for having thrown her glove to the lions and commanding him to rescue it, did not love! He misprized your right to test us, to make sure of our love, and never to lay down your arms but to superhuman magnanimity. To you I would sacrifice my family, my name, my future life."

"What an insult lies in that word sacrifice!" replied she in a reproachful tone, which made Calyste feel all the folly of his expression.

Only women who love wholly, or utter coquettes, can take a word as a fulcrum, and spring to prodigious heights; wit and feeling act on the same lines; but the woman who loves is grieved, the coquette is contemptuous.

"You are right," said Calyste, dropping two tears, "the word can only be applied to the achievement you demand of me."

"Be silent," said Béatrix, startled by a reply in which for the first time Calyste really expressed his love. "I have done wrong enough.—Do not tempt me."

They had just reached the base of the box-cliff. Calyste felt intoxicating joys in helping the Marquise to climb the rock; she was bent on mounting to the very top. The poor boy thought it the height of rapture to support her by the waist, to feel her slightly tremulous: she needed him! The unhoped-for joy turned his brain, he saw nothing, he put his arm round her body.

"Well!" said she with an imperious look.

"Open your eyes, forgive me!" said Calyste, "or we die together"

"You will never be mine?" he asked in a voice choked by a storm in his blood.

"Never, my dear," said she. "To you I can only be Béatrix —a dream. And is not a dream sweet? We shall know no bitterness, no regrets, no repentance."

"And you will return to Conti?"

"There is no help for it."

"Then you shall never more be any man's," cried Calyste, flinging her from him with mad violence.

He listened for her fall before throwing himself after her, but he only heard a dull noise, the harsh rending of stuff, and the heavy sound of a body falling on earth. Instead of tumbling headforemost, Béatrix had turned over; she had fallen into the box-tree; but she would have rolled to the bottom of the sea nevertheless if her gown had not caught on a corner, and, by tearing, checked the force of her fall on the bush.

Mademoiselle des Touches, who had witnessed the scene, could not call out, for she was aghast, and could only signal to Gasselin to hasten up. Calyste leaned over, prompted by a fierce sort of curiosity; he saw Béatrix as she lay, and shuddered. She seemed to be praying; she thought she must die, she felt the box-tree giving away. With the sudden presence of mind inspired by love, and the supernatural agility of youth in the face of danger, he let himself down the nine feet of rock by his hands, clinging to the rough edges, to the little shelf, where he was in time to rescue the Marquise by taking her in his arms, at the risk of their both falling into the sea. When he caught Béatrix she became unconscious; but he could dream that she was his, wholly his, in this aerial bed where they might have to remain a long time, and his first feeling was an impulse of gladness.

"Open your eyes, forgive me!" said Calyste. "Or we die together."

"Die?" said she, opening her eyes, and unsealing her pale lips.

Calyste received the word with a kiss, and then was aware of a spasmodic thrill in the Marquise, which was ecstasy to

him. At that instant Gasselin's nailed shoes were audible above them. Camille followed the Breton, and they were anxiously considering the means of saving the lovers.

"There is but one way, mademoiselle," said Gasselin. "I will let myself down; they will climb up on my shoulders, and you will give them your hand."

"And you?" said Camille.

The man seemed astonished at being held of any account when his young master was in danger.

"It will be better to fetch a ladder from le Croisic," said Camille.

"She is a knowing one, she is!" said Gasselin to himself, as he went off. Béatrix, in a feeble voice, begged to be laid on the ground; she felt faint. Calyste laid her down on the cool earth between the rock and the box-tree.

"I saw you, Calyste," said Camille. "Whether Béatrix dies or is saved, this must never be anything but an accident."

"She will hate me!" he cried, his eyes full of tears.

"She will worship you," replied Camille. "This is an end to our excursion; she must be carried to les Touches.—What would have become of you if she had been killed?" she said.

"I should have followed her."

"And your mother?—and," she softly added after a pause, "and me?"

Calyste stood pale, motionless, and silent, his back against the granite. Gasselin very soon returned from one of the little farms that lie scattered among the fields, running with a ladder he had borrowed. Béatrix had somewhat recovered her strength. When Gasselin had fixed the ladder, the Marquise, helped by Gasselin, who begged Calyste to put Camille's red shawl round Béatrix under her arms, and to give him up the ends, climbed up to the little plateau, where Gasselin took her in his arms like a child, and carried her down to the shore.

"Death I would not say nay to—but pain!" said she in a weak voice to Mademoiselle des Touches.

The faintness and shock from which Béatrix was suffering made it necessary that she should be carried as far as the farm whence Gasselin had borrowed the ladder. Calyste, Gasselin,

and Camille took off such garments as they could dispense with, and made a sort of mattress on the ladder, on which they laid Béatrix, carrying it like a litter. The farm-people offered their bed. Gasselin hurried off to the spot where the horses were waiting for them, took one, and fetched a surgeon from le Croisic, after ordering the boatmen to come up the creek that lay nearest to the farm. Calyste, sitting on a low stool, answered Camille's remarks with nods and rare monosyllables, and Mademoiselle des Touches was equally uneasy as to Béatrix's condition and Calyste's.

After being bled, the patient felt better; she could speak; she consented to go in the boat; and at about five in the afternoon they crossed to Guérande, where the town doctor was waiting for her. The news of the accident had spread in this deserted and almost uninhabited land with amazing rapidity.

Calyste spent the night at les Touches at the foot of Béatrix's bed with Camille. The doctor promised that by next morning the Marquise would suffer from nothing worse than stiffness. Through Calyste's despair a great happiness beamed. He was at the foot of Béatrix's bed watching her asleep or waking; he could study her pale face, her lightest movements. Camille smiled bitterly as she recognized in the lad all the symptoms of a passion such as tinges the soul and mind of a man by becoming a part of his life at a time when no thought, no cares counteract this torturing mental process.

Calyste would never discern the real woman in Béatrix. How guilelessly did the young Breton allow her to read his most secret soul!—Why, he fancied she was his, merely because he found himself here, in her room, admiring her in the disorder of the bed. He watched Béatrix in her slightest movement with rapturous attention; his face expressed such sweet curiosity, his ecstasy was so artlessly betrayed, that there was a moment when the two women looked at each other with a smile. As Calyste read in the invalid's fine sea-green eyes a mixed expression of confusion, love, and amusement, he blushed and looked away.

"Did I not say to you, Calyste, that you men promised us happiness and ended by throwing us over a precipice?"

As he heard this little jest, spoken in a charming tone of voice, which betrayed some change in Béatrix's heart, Calyste knelt down, took one of her moist hands, which she allowed him to hold, and kissed it very submissively.

"You have every right to reject my love for ever," said he, "and I have no right ever to say a single word to you again."

"Ah!" cried Camille, as she saw the expression of her friend's face, and compared it with that she had seen after every effort of diplomacy; "love unaided will always have more wit than all the world beside.—Take your draught, my dear, and go to sleep."

This evening spent by Calyste with Mademoiselle des Touches, who read books on mystical theology, while Calyste read *Indiana*—the first work of Camille's famous rival, in which he found the captivating picture of a young man who loved with idolatry and devotion, with mysterious rapture, and for his whole life—a book of fatal teaching for him!—this evening left an ineffaceable mark on the heart of the unhappy youth, for Félicité at last convinced him that any woman who was not a monster could only be happy and flattered in every vanity, by knowing herself to be the object of a crime.

"You would never, never, have thrown me into the sea!" said poor Camille, wiping away a tear.

Towards morning Calyste, quite worn out, fell asleep in his chair. It was now the Marquise's turn to look at the pretty boy, pale with agitation and his first love-watch; she heard him murmuring words in his sleep.

"He loves in his very dreams!" said she to Camille.

"We must send him home to bed," said Félicité, awaking him.

No one was alarmed at the du Guénics'; Mademoiselle des Touches had written a few words to the Baroness.

Calyste dined at les Touches next day. He found Béatrix up, pale, languid, and tired. But there was no hardness now in her speech or looks. After that evening, which Camille

filled with music, seating herself at the piano to allow Calyste to hold and press Béatrix's hands while they could say nothing to each other, there was never a storm at les Touches. Félicité completely effaced herself.

Women like Madame de Rochefide, cold, fragile, hard, and thin—such women, whose throat shows a form of collar-bone suggestive of the feline race—have souls as pale and colorless as their pale gray or green eyes; to melt them, to vitrify these flints, a thunderbolt is needed. To Béatrix this thunderbolt had fallen in Calyste's rage of love and attempt on her life; it was such a flame as nothing can resist, changing the most stubborn nature. Béatrix felt herself softened; pure and true love flooded her soul with its soothing lapping glow. She floated in a mild and tender atmosphere of feeling hitherto unknown, in which she felt ennobled, elevated; she had entered into the heaven where, in all ages, woman has dwelt, in Brittany. She enjoyed the respectful worship of this boy, whose happiness cost her so little; for a smile, a look, a word was enough for Calyste. Such value set by feeling on such trifles touched her extremely. To this angelic soul, the glove she had worn could be more than her whole body was to the man who ought to have adored her. What a contrast!

What woman could have resisted this persistent idolatry? She was sure of being understood and obeyed. If she had bid Calyste to risk his life for her smallest whim, he would not even have paused to think. And Béatrix acquired an indescribable air of imposing dignity; she looked at love on its loftiest side, and sought in it a footing, as it were, which would enable her to remain, in Calyste's eyes, the supreme woman; she wished her power over him to be eternal. She coquetted all the more persistently because she felt herself weak.

For a whole week she played the invalid with engaging hypocrisy. How many times did she walk round and round the green lawn that spread on the garden side of the house, leaning on Calyste's arm, and reviving in Camille the torments she had caused her during the first week of her visit.

"Well, my dear, you are taking him the Grand Tour!" said Mademoiselle des Touches to the Marquise.

One evening, before the excursion to le Croisic, the two women had been discussing love, and laughing over the various ways in which men made their declarations, confessing that the most skilful, and, of course, therefore the least devoted, did not waste time in wandering through the mazes of sentimentality, and were right; so that those who loved best were, at a certain stage, the worst used.

"They set to work as la Fontaine did to get into the Academy," said Camille.

Her remark now recalled this conversation to Béatrix's memory while reproving her Machiavelian conduct. Madame de Rochefide had absolute power over Calyste, and could keep him within the bounds she chose, reminding him by a look or a gesture of his horrible violence by the seashore. Then the poor martyr's eyes would fill with tears; he was silent, swallowing down his arguments, his hopes, his griefs, with a heroism that would have touched any other woman.

Her infernal coquetting brought him to such desperation that he came one day to throw himself into Camille's arms and ask her advice. Béatrix, armed with Calyste's letter, had picked out the passage in which he said that loving was the chief happiness, that being loved was second to it, and she had made use of this axiom to suppress his passion to such a degree of respectful idolatry as she chose to permit. She reveled in having her spirit soothed by the sweet concert of praise and adoration which nature suggests to youth; and there is so much art too, though unconscious, so much innocent seductiveness in their cries, their prayers, their exclamations, their appeals to themselves, in their readiness to mortgage the future, that Béatrix took care not to answer him. She had told him she doubted! Happiness was not yet in question, only the permission to love that the lad was constantly asking for, persistently bent on taking the citadel from the strongest side—that of the mind and heart.

The woman who is bravest in word is often weak in action.

After seeing what progress he had made by his attempt to push Béatrix into the sea, it is strange that Calyste should not have continued the pursuit of happiness through violence; but love in these young lads is so ecstatic and religious that it insists on absolute conviction. Hence its sublimity.

However, one day Calyste, driven to bay by desire, complained vehemently to Camille of Madame de Rochefide's conduct.

"I wanted to cure you by enabling you to know her from the first," replied Mademoiselle des Touches, "but you spoilt all by your impetuosity. Ten days since you were her master; now you are her slave, my poor boy. So you would never be strong enough to carry out my orders."

"What must I do?"

"Quarrel with her on the ground of her cruelty. A woman is always carried away by talk; make her treat you badly, and do not return to les Touches till she sends for you."

There is a moment in every severe disease when the patient accepts the most painful remedies, and submits to the most horrible operations. Calyste was at this crisis. He took Camille's advice; he stayed at home for two days; but on the third he was tapping at Béatrix's door and telling her that he and Camille were waiting breakfast for her.

"Another chance lost!" said Camille, seeing him sneak back so tamely.

During those two days Béatrix had stopped frequently at the window whence the Guérande road could be seen. When Camille found her there she said that she was studying the effect of the gorse by the roadside, its golden bloom blazing under the September sun. Thus Camille had read her friend's secret; she had only to say the word for Calyste to be happy. But she did not speak it; she was still too much a woman to urge him to the deed so dreaded by young hearts, who seem aware of all that their ideal must lose by it.

Béatrix kept Camille and Calyste waiting some little time; if he had been any other man, the delay would have seemed significant, for the Marquise's dress suggested her wish to fas-

cinate Calyste and prevent his absenting himself again. After breakfast she went to walk in the garden, and enchanted him with joy, as she enchanted him with love, by expressing her wish to go with him again to see the spot where she had so nearly perished.

"Let us go alone," said Calyste in a broken voice.

"If I refused," said she, "I might give you reason to think that you were dangerous. Alas! as I have told you a thousand times, I belong to another, and must for ever be his alone. I chose him, knowing nothing of love. The fault was twofold, and the punishment double."

When she spoke thus, her eyes moist with the rare tears such women can shed, Calyste felt a sort of pity that cooled his furious ardor; he worshiped her then as a Madonna. We must not expect that different natures should resemble each other in the expression of their feelings, any more than we look for the same fruits from different trees. Béatrix at this moment was torn in her mind; she hesitated between herself and Calyste; between the world, where she hoped some day to be seen again, and perfect happiness; between ruining herself finally by a second unpardonable passion and social forgiveness. She was beginning to listen without even affected annoyance to the language of blind love; she allowed herself to be soothed by the gentle hands of pity. Already, many times, she had been moved to tears by hearing Calyste promising her love enough to make up for all she could lose in the eyes of the world, and pitying her for being bound to such an evil genius, to a man as false as Conti. More than once she had not silenced Calyste when she had told him of the misery and sufferings that overwhelmed her in Italy when she found that she did not reign alone in Conti's heart. Camille had given Calyste more than one lecture on this subject, and Calyste had profited by them.

"I," said he, "love you wholly; you will find in me none of the triumphs of art, nor the pleasures derived from seeing a crowd bewildered by the wonders of talent; my only talent is for loving you, my only joys will be in yours; no woman's ad-

miration will seem to me worthy of consideration; you need fear no odious rivals. You are misprized; and wherever you are accepted I desire also to be accepted every day."

She listened to his words with a drooping head, allowing him to kiss her hands, and confessing to herself silently but very readily that she was perhaps a misunderstood angel.

"I am too much humiliated," she replied; "my past deprives me of all security for the future."

It was a great day for Calyste when, on reaching les Touches at seven in the morning, he saw from between two gorse bushes Béatrix at a window, wearing the same straw hat that she had worn on the day of their excursion. He felt quite dazzled. These small details of passion make the world wider.

Only Frenchwomen, perhaps, have the secret of these theatrical touches; they owe them to their graceful wit, of which they infuse just so much into feeling as it can bear without losing its force.

Ah! how lightly she leaned on Calyste's arm. They went out together by the garden gate leading to the sand-hills. Béatrix thought their wildness pleasing; she saw the little rigid plants that grow there with their pink blossoms, and gathered several, with some of the Carthusian pinks, which also thrive on barren sands, and divided the flowers significantly with Calyste, to whom these blossoms and leaves were to have an eternally sinister association.

"We will add a sprig of box!" said she with a smile.

She stood for some time waiting for the boat on the jetty, where Calyste told her of his childish eagerness the day of her arrival.

"That expedition, which I heard of, was the cause of my severity that first day," said she.

Throughout their walk Madame de Rochefide talked in the half-jesting tone of a woman who loves, and with tenderness and freedom of manner. Calyste might believe himself loved. But when, as they went along the strand under the rocks, and

down into one of those pretty bays where the waves have thrown up a marvelous mosaic of the strangest marbles, with which they played like children at picking up the finest specimens—when Calyste, at the height of intoxication, proposed in so many words that they should fly to Ireland, she assumed a dignified and mysterious air, begged to take his arm, and went on towards the cliff she had called her Tarpeian rock.

"My dear fellow," said she, as they slowly climbed the fine block of granite she meant to take as her pedestal, "I have not courage enough to conceal all you are to me. For the last ten years I have known no happiness to compare with that we have just enjoyed in hunting for shells among those tide-washed rocks, in exchanging pebbles, of which I shall have a necklace made, more precious in my eyes than if it were composed of the finest diamonds. I have been a child again, a little girl such as I was at thirteen or fourteen, when I was worthy of you. The love I have been so happy as to inspire you with has elevated me in my own eyes. Understand this in all its magical meaning. You have made me the proudest, the happiest of my sex, and you will live longer in my memory than I probably shall in yours."

At this moment she had reached the summit of the cliff, whence the vast ocean was seen spreading on one side, and on the other the Brittany coast with its golden islets, its feudal towers, and its clumps of gorse. Never had a woman a finer stage on which to make a grand avowal.

"But," she went on, "I am not my own; I am more firmly bound by my own act than I was by law. So you are punished for my misfortune; you must be content to know that we suffer together. Dante never saw Beatrice again, Petrarch never possessed his Laura. Such disasters befall none but great souls.

"Oh! if ever I should be deserted, if I should fall a thousand degrees lower in shame and infamy, if your Béatrix is cruelly misunderstood by a world that will be loathsome to her, if she should be the most despised of women! . . . Then, beloved child," she added, taking his hand, "you will know

that she is the foremost of them all, that she could rise to heaven with your support. But then, my friend," she added, with a lofty glance at him, "when you want to throw her down, do not miss your stroke; after your love, death!"

Calyste had his arm round her waist; he clasped her to his heart. To confirm her tender words, Madame de Rochefide sealed Calyste's forehead with the most chaste and timid kiss. Then they went down the path and returned slowly, talking like two people who perfectly understand and enter into each other's minds; she believing she had secured peace, he no longer doubting that he was to be happy—and both deceived.

Calyste hoped from what Camille had observed that Conti would be delighted to seize the opportunity of giving up Béatrix. The Marquise on her part abandoned herself to the uncertainty of things, waiting on chance. Calyste was too deeply in love and too ingenuous to create the chance. They both reached les Touches in the most delightful frame of mind, going in by the garden gate, of which Calyste had taken the key.

It was now about six o'clock. The intoxicating perfumes, the mild atmosphere, the golden tones of the evening light were all in harmony with their tender mood and talk. Their steps were matched and equal as those of lovers are; their movements betrayed the unison of their minds. Such silence reigned at les Touches that the sound of the opening and closing gate echoed distinctly, and must have been heard all over the grounds. As Calyste and Béatrix had said all they had to say, and their agitating walk had tired them, they came in slowly and without speaking.

Suddenly, as she turned an angle, Béatrix was seized with a spasm of horror—the infectious dread that is caused by the sight of a reptile, and that chilled Calyste before he saw its occasion. On a bench under a weeping-ash Conti sat talking to Camille Maupin. Madame de Rochefide's convulsive internal trembling was more evident than she wished. Calyste now knew how dear he was to this woman who had just built up the barrier between herself and him, no doubt with a view to securing a few days more for coquetting before overleaping it.

In one instant a tragical drama in endless perspective was felt in each heart.

"You did not expect me so soon, I dare say," said the artist, offering Béatrix his arm.

The Marquise could not avoid relinquishing Calyste's arm and taking Conti's. This undignified transition, so imperatively demanded, so full of offence to the later love, was too much for Calyste, who went to throw himself on the bench by Camille, after exchanging the most distant greeting with his rival. He felt a hundred contending sensations. On discerning how much Béatrix loved him, his impulse was to rush at the artist and declare that she was his; but the poor woman's moral convulsion, betraying her sufferings—for she had in that one moment paid the forfeit of all her sins—had startled him so much that he remained stupefied, stricken, like her, by relentless necessity. These antagonistic impulses produced the most violent storm of feeling he had yet known since he had loved Béatrix.

Madame de Rochefide and Conti went past the seat where Calyste had thrown himself by Camille's side; the Marquise looking at her rival with one of those terrible flashes by which a woman can convey everything. She avoided Calyste's eye, and seemed to listen to Conti, who was talking lightly.

"What can they be saying?" asked Calyste of Camille.

"Dear child, you have no idea yet of the terrible hold a man has over a woman on the strength of a dead passion. Béatrix could not refuse him her hand. He is laughing at her, no doubt, over her fresh love affair; he guessed it, of course, from your behavior, and the way in which you came in together when he saw you."

"He is laughing at her!" cried the vehement youth.

"Keep calm," said Camille, "or you will lose the few chances that remain to you. If he wounds Béatrix too much in her vanities, she will trample him under foot like a worm. But he is astute; he will know how to do it cleverly. He will not suppose that the haughty Madame de Rochefide could

possibly be false to him! It would be too base to love a young man for his beauty! He will no doubt speak of you to her as a mere boy bewitched by the notion of possessing a Marquise and of ruling the destinies of two women. Finally, he will thunder with the rattling artillery of insulting insinuations. Then Béatrix will be obliged to combat him with false denials, of which he will take advantage, and remain master of the field."

"Ah!" cried Calyste, "he does not love. I should leave her free. Love demands a choice renewed every minute, confirmed every day. The morrow is the justification of yesterday, and increases our hoard of joys.—A few days later, and he would not have found us here. What brought him back?"

"A journalist's taunt," said Camille. "The opera on whose success he had counted is a failure—a dead failure. These words spoken in the greenroom, perhaps by Claude Vignon, 'It is hard to lose your reputation and your mistress both at once!' stung him, no doubt, in all his vanities. Love based on mean sentiments is merciless.

"I questioned him; but who can trust so false and deceitful a nature? He seemed weary of poverty and of love, disgusted with life. He regretted having connected himself so publicly with the Marquise, and in speaking of their past happiness fell into a strain of poetic melancholy rather too elegant to be genuine. He hoped, no doubt, to extract the secret of your love from the joy his flattery must give me."

"Well?" said Calyste, looking at Béatrix and Conti returning, and listening no longer to Camille.

Camille had prudently kept on the defensive; she had not betrayed either Calyste's secret or Béatrix's. The artist was a man to dupe any one in the world, and Mademoiselle des Touches warned Calyste to be on his guard with him.

"My dear child," said she, "this is for you the most critical moment; such prudence and skill are needed as you have not, and you will be fooled by the most cunning man on earth; for I can do no more for you."

A bell announced that dinner was served. Conti offered his arm to Camille, Béatrix took that of Calyste. Camille let the Marquise lead the way; she had a moment to look at Calyste and enjoin prudence by putting her finger to her lips.

All through dinner Conti was in the highest spirits. This was perhaps a way of gauging Madame de Rochefide, who played her part badly. As a coquette she might have deceived Conti; but, being seriously in love, she betrayed herself. The wily musician, far from watching her, seemed not to observe her embarrassment. At dessert he began talking of women and crying up their noble feelings.

"A woman who would desert us in prosperity will sacrifice everything to us in adversity," said he. "Women have the advantage of men in constancy; a woman must be deeply offended, indeed, to throw over a first lover; she clings to him as to her honor; a second love is a disgrace——" and so forth.

He was astoundingly moral; he burnt incense before the altar on which a heart was bleeding pierced by a thousand stabs. Only Camille and Béatrix understood the virulence of the acrid satire he poured out in the form of praises. Now and again they both colored, but they were obliged to control themselves; they went up to Camille's sitting-room arm-in-arm, and with one consent passed through the larger drawing-room, where there were no lights, and they could exchange a few words.

"I cannot endure to let Conti walk over my prostrate body, to give him a right over me," said Béatrix in an undertone. "The convict on the hulks is always at the mercy of the man he is chained to. I am lost! I must go back to the hulks of love!—And it is you who have sent me back. Ah, you made him come a day too late—or too soon. I recognize your infernal gift of romance. Yes, the revenge is complete, the climax perfect."

"I could threaten you that I would write to Conti, but as to doing it!—I am incapable of such a thing!" cried Camille. "You are miserable, so I forgive you."

"What will become of Calyste?" said the Marquise, with the exquisite artlessness of vanity.

"Then is Conti taking you away?" cried Camille.

"Ah! you expect to triumph?" retorted Béatrix.

The Marquise spoke the hideous words with rage, her beautiful features distorted, while Camille tried to conceal her gladness under an assumed expression of regret; but the light in her eyes gave the lie to the gravity of her face, and Béatrix could see through the mask! When they saw each other by candlelight, sitting on the divan where during the last three weeks so many comedies had been played out, where the secret tragedy of so many thwarted passions had had its beginning, the two women studied each other for the last time; they saw that they were divided by a deep gulf of hatred.

"I leave you Calyste," said Béatrix, seeing her rival's eyes. "But I am fixed in his heart, and no woman will oust me."

Camille retorted by quoting, in a tone of subtle irony which stung the Marquise to the quick, the famous speech of Mazarin's niece to Louis XIV.: "You reign, you love him, and you are going!"

Neither of them throughout this scene, which was a stormy one, noticed the absence of Calyste and Conti. The artist had remained at table with his rival, desiring him to keep him company, and finish a bottle of champagne.

"We have something to say to each other," said Conti, to anticipate any refusal.

In the position in which they stood to each other, the young Breton was obliged to obey the behest.

"My dear boy," said the singer in a soothing voice when Calyste had drunk two glasses of wine, "we are a couple of good fellows; we may be frank with each other. I did not come here because I was suspicious. Béatrix loves me." And he assumed a fatuous air. "For my part, I love her no longer; I have come, not to carry her off, but to break with her and leave her the credit of the rupture. You are young:

you do not know how necessary it is to seem the victim when you feel that you are the executioner. Young men spout fire and flame, they make a parade of throwing over a woman, they often scorn her and make her hate them; but a wise man gets himself dismissed, and puts on a humiliated expression which leaves the lady some regrets and a sweet sense of superiority. The displeasure of the divinity is not irremediable, while abdication is past all reparation.

"You, happily for you, do not yet know how our lives may be hampered by the senseless promises which women are such fools as to accept, when gallantry requires us to tie such slip-knots to divert the idle hours of happiness. The pair then swear eternal fidelity. A man has some adventure with a woman—he does not fail to assure her politely that he hopes to live and die with her; he pretends to be impatiently awaiting the demise of a husband while earnestly wishing him perfect health. If the husband should die, there are women so provincial or so tenacious, so silly or so wily, as to rush on the man, crying, 'I am free—here I am!'

"Not one of us is free. The spent ball recoils and falls into the midst of our best-planned triumph or happiness.

"I foresaw that you would love Béatrix; I left her in a situation in which she must need flirt with you without abdicating her sacred majesty, were it only to annoy that angel, Camille Maupin. Well, my dear fellow, love her; you will be doing me a service. I only want her to behave atrociously to me. I dread her pride and her virtue.—Perhaps, in spite of goodwill on my side, some time will be required for this manœuvre. On such occasions the one who does not take the first step wins. Just now, as we walked round the lawn, I tried to tell her that I knew all, and wished her joy of her happiness. Well, she was very angry.

"I, at this moment, am in love with the youngest of our singers, Mademoiselle Falcon, of the Opera, and I want to marry her. Yes, I have got so far as that! But when you come to Paris, you will say I have exchanged a Marquise for a Queen!"

Joy shed its glory on Calyste's candid face; he confessed his love; this was all that Conti wanted.

There is not a man in the world, however *blasé*, however depraved, whose love does not revive as soon as it is threatened by a rival. We may wish to be rid of a woman; we do not wish that she should throw us over. When lovers have come to this extremity, men and women alike try to be first in the field, so cruel is the wound to their self-respect. Perhaps what is at stake is all that Society has thrown into that feeling; it is indeed less a matter of self-respect than of life itself, the whole future is in the balance; we feel as if we were losing not the interest, but the capital.

Calyste, cross-examined by the artist, related all that had happened during these three weeks at les Touches, and was delighted with Conti, who concealed his rage under a semblance of delightful good-nature.

"Let us go upstairs," said he. "Women are not trustful; they will not understand how we can have sat together for so long without clutching at each other's hair; they might come down to listen.—I will do all I can for you, my dear child. I will be odious, rude, and jealous with the Marquise; I will constantly suspect her of deceiving me—there is nothing more certain to lead a woman to a betrayal; you will be happy, and I shall be free. You, this evening, must assume the part of a disconcerted lover; I shall play the suspicious and jealous man. Pity the angel for her enthralment to a man without fine feelings—weep! You can weep, you are young. I, alas, can no longer weep; it is a great advantage lost."

Calyste and Conti went upstairs. The musician, requested to sing by his young rival, chose the greatest test known to musical executants, the famous *"Pria che spunti l'aurora,"* which Rubini himself never attempts without a qualm, and in which Conti had often triumphed. Never had he been more wonderful than at this moment when so many feelings were seething in his breast. Calyste was in ecstasies. At the first note of the cavatina the singer fired a glance at the

Marquise which gave cruel significance to the words, and which was understood. Camille, playing the accompaniment, guessed that it was a command that made Béatrix bow her head. She looked at Calyste, and suspected that the boy had fallen into some snare in spite of her warnings. She was certain of it when the youth went gleefully to bid Béatrix good-night, kissing her hand and pressing it with a little knowing and confident look.

By the time Calyste had reached Guérande the ladies' maid and servants were packing Conti's traveling carriage; and "before the dawn," as he had sung, he had carried off Béatrix, with Camille's horses, as far as the first posting-house.

Under cover of the darkness, Madame de Rochefide was able to look back at Guérande, whose tower, white in the daybreak, stood out in the gray light. She gave herself up to melancholy, for she was leaving there one of the fairest flowers of life—love such as the purest girls may dream of. Respect of persons was crushing the only true love this woman had ever known, or could ever know, in all her life. The woman of the world was obeying the laws of the world, sacrificing love to appearances, as some women sacrifice it to religion or to duty. From this point of view, this terrible story is that of many women.

Next day, at about noon, Calyste arrived at les Touches. When he reached the turn in the road whence, yesterday, he had seen Béatrix at the window, he caught sight of Camille, who hurried out to meet him. At the bottom of the stairs she said this cruel word:

"Gone!"

"Béatrix?" cried Calyste, stunned.

"You were duped by Conti. You told me nothing; I could do nothing."

She led the poor boy to her little drawing-room; he sank on the divan in the place where he had so often seen the Marquise, and melted into tears. Félicité said nothing; she smoked her hookah, knowing that nothing can stem the first rush of such suffering, which is always deaf and speechless.

Calyste, since there was nothing to be done, stayed there all day in a state of utter torpor. Just before dinner, Camille tried to say a few words to him, after begging that he would listen to her.

"My dear boy," said she, "you have been the cause to me of intense suffering, and I have not, as you have, a fair future life in which to recover. To me the earth has no further springtime, the soul no further love. So I, to find comfort, must look higher.

"Here, the day before Béatrix came, I painted her portrait; I would not darken it, you would have thought that I was jealous. Now, listen to the truth. Madame de Rochefide is as far as possible from being worthy of you. The display of her fall was not necessary, but she would have been nobody but for that scandal; she made it on purpose to have a part to play. She is one of those women who prefer the parade of wrongdoing to the calm peace of happiness; they affront Society to wring from it the evil gift of a slander; they must be talked about, at whatever cost. She was eaten up by vanity. Her fortune and wit had not availed to give her the feminine dominion which she had tried to conquer by presiding over a *salon;* she had fancied that she could achieve the celebrity of the Duchesse de Langeais and the Vicomtesse de Beauséant; but the world is just, it bestows the honors of its interest only on genuine passion.

"Her flight was not justified by any obstacles. Damocles' sword did not hang glittering over her festivities; and besides, in Paris, those who love truly and sincerely may easily be happy in a quiet way. In short, if she could be tender and loving, she would not have gone off last night with Conti."

Camille talked for a long time, and very eloquently, but this last effort was in vain; she ceased on seeing a shrug, by which Calyste conveyed his entire belief in Béatrix, and she insisted on his coming down and sitting with her at dinner, for he found it impossible to eat.

It is only while we are very young that these spasmodic symptoms occur. At a later period the organs have formed

habits, and are, as it were, hardened. The reaction of the moral system on the physical is never strong enough to induce mortal illness unless the constitution preserves its original delicacy. A man can resist a violent grief which kills a youth, less because his feelings are not so strong, than because his organs are stronger. Mademoiselle des Touches was indeed alarmed from the first by Calyste's calm and resigned attitude after the first flood of tears. Before leaving the house, he begged to see Béatrix's room once more, and hid his face in the pillow on which hers had rested.

"This is folly!" said he, shaking hands with Camille and leaving her, sunk in melancholy.

He returned home, found the usual party engaged in playing *mouche,* and sat by his mother all the evening. The curé, the Chevalier du Halga, and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël all knew of Madame de Rochefide's departure, and were all glad. Calyste would now come back to them, and they all watched, almost by stealth, seeing that he was silent. Nobody in that old house could conceive of all that this death of a first love must be to a heart as true and artless as Calyste's.

For some days Calyste went regularly to les Touches; he would wander round the grass-plot where he had sometimes walked arm-in-arm with Béatrix. He often went as far as le Croisic, and climbed the rock whence he had tried to throw her into the sea; he would sit for hours leaning on the box-shrub, for by examining the projections on the riven rock he had learnt to climb up and down the face of it. His solitary expeditions, his silence, and his lack of appetite at last made his mother uneasy. At the end of a fortnight, while these proceedings lasted—a good deal like those of an animal in its cage, and the despairing lover's cage was, to adopt la Fontaine's phrase, "the spots honored by the footstep, illuminated by the eyes" of Béatrix—Calyste could no longer cross the little inlet; he had only strength enough to drag himself as far on the Guérande road as the spot whence he had seen Béatrix at the window.

The family, glad at the departing of "the Parisians," to use the provincial phrase, discerned nothing ominous or sickly in Calyste. The two old maids and the curé, following up their plan, had kept Charlotte de Kergarouët, who, in the evening, made eyes at Calyste, and got nothing in return but advice as to her game of *mouche*. All through the evening Calyste would sit between his mother and his provincial fiancée, under the eye of the curé and of Charlotte's aunt, who, on their way home, would comment on his greater or less dejection. They took the unhappy boy's indifference for acquiescence in their plans.

One evening, when Calyste, being tired, had gone early to bed, the players all left their cards on the table, and looked at each other as the young man shut his bedroom door. They had listened anxiously to his footsteps.

"Something ails Calyste," said the Baroness, wiping her eyes.

"There is nothing the matter with him," replied Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël; "we must get him married as soon as may be."

"Do you think that will divert him?" said the Chevalier.

Charlotte looked sternly at Monsieur du Halga, whom she thought in very bad taste this evening, immoral, depraved, irreligious, and quite ridiculous with his dog, in spite of her aunt, who always took the old sailor's part.

"To-morrow morning I will lecture Calyste," said the Baron, whom they had thought asleep; "I do not want to go out of this world without having seen my grandson, a little pink-and-white du Guénic, with a Breton hood on in his cradle."

"He never speaks a word," said old Zéphirine, "no one knows what ails him; he never ate less in his life; what does he live on? If he eats at les Touches, the devil's cookery does him no good."

"He is in love," said the Chevalier, proffering this opinion with extreme timidity.

"Now, then, old dotard, you have not put into the pool,"

said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël. "When you are thinking of your young days, you forget everything else."

"Come to breakfast with us to-morrow morning," said old Zéphirine to Charlotte and Jacqueline; "my brother will talk to his son, and we will settle everything. One nail drives out another."

"Not in a Breton," said the Chevalier.

The next morning Calyste saw Charlotte arrive, dressed with unusual care, though it was still early, just as his father had ended giving him, in the dining-room, a discourse on matrimony, to which the lad could find nothing to say. He knew how ignorant his aunt, his father, and his mother were, and all their friends; he was gathering the fruits of knowledge; he found himself isolated, no longer speaking the language of the household. So he only begged a few days' respite, and his father rubbed his hands with joy, and gave new life to the Baroness by whispering the good news in her ear.

Breakfast was a cheerful meal. Charlotte, to whom the Baron had given a wink, was in high spirits. A rumor filtered through Gasselin, by which all the town knew that the du Guénics and the Kergarouëts had come to an understanding. After breakfast Calyste went out of the hall by the steps on the garden side, and was followed by Charlotte; he offered her his arm, and led her to the arbor at the bottom of the garden. The old folks, standing at the window, looked at them with a sort of pathos. Charlotte looked back at the pretty house, somewhat uneasy at her companion's silence, and took advantage of their presence to begin the conversation by saying to Calyste, "They are watching us!"

"They cannot hear us," he replied.

"No, but they can see us."

"Let us sit down," said Calyste gently, as he took her hand.

"Is it true that your banner once floated from that twisted pillar?" asked Charlotte, looking at the house as if it were her own. "It would look well there!—How happy one might be here! You will make some alterations in the arrangement of your house, will you not, Calyste?"

"I shall have no time for it, my dear Charlotte," said the young man, taking her hands and kissing them. "I will tell you my secret. I love a woman whom you have seen, and who loves me—love her too well to make any other woman happy; and I know that from our infancy you and I have always been intended to marry."

"But she is married, Calyste," said Charlotte.

"I will wait," said the boy.

"And so will I," said Charlotte, her eyes full of tears. "You cannot love that woman for long; she has gone off with a singer, they say. . . ."

"Marry some one else, my dear Charlotte," said Calyste. "With such a fortune as your aunt has to leave you, which is enormous in Brittany, you can find a better match than I. You will find a man with a title.—I have not brought you out here to tell you what you already know, but to entreat you in the name of our long friendship to take the matter upon yourself and to refuse me. Say that you can have nothing to say to a man whose heart is not free, and my passion will at least have been so far serviceable that I shall have done you no wrong. You cannot think how life weighs upon me! I cannot endure any struggle, I am as weak as a body deserted by its soul, by the very element of life. But for the grief that my death would be to my mother and my aunt, I should have thrown myself into the sea ere now, and I have never gone to the rocks of le Croisic since the day when the temptation began to be irresistible.—Say nothing of this.—Charlotte, farewell!"

He took the girl's head in his hands, kissed her hair, went out of the path under the gable, and made his escape to Camille's, where he remained till midnight.

On returning at about one in the morning, he found his mother busy with her tapestry, waiting for him. He crept in softly, took her hand, and asked:

"Is Charlotte gone?"

"She is going to-morrow with her aunt; they are both in despair.—Come to Ireland, my Calyste," she added.

"How many times have I dreamed of flying thither!" said he.

"Really!" exclaimed the Baroness.

"With Béatrix," he added.

Some days after Charlotte's departure, Calyste was walking with the Chevalier du Halga on the Mall, and he sat down in the sun on a bench whence his eye could command the whole landscape, from the weather-cocks of les Touches to the shoals marked out by the foaming breakers which dance above the reefs at high tide. Calyste was thin and pale, his strength was diminishing, he was beginning to have little periodical shivering fits, symptomatic of fever. His eyes, with dark marks round them, had the hard glitter which a fixed idea will give to lonely persons, or which the ardor of the struggle imparts to the bold leaders of the civilization of our age. The Chevalier was the only person with whom he sometimes exchanged his ideas; he had discerned in this old man an apostle of his religion, and found in him the traces of a never-dying love.

"Have you loved many women in your life?" he asked, the second time that he and the old navy man sailed in company, as the Captain called it, up and down the Mall.

"Only one," said the Captain.

"Was she free?"

"No," said the Chevalier. "Ah, I suffered much! She was my best friend's wife—my patron's, my chief's; but we loved each other so much!"

"She loved you, then?"

"Passionately," replied du Halga, with unwonted vehemence.

"And you were happy?"

"Till her death. She died at the age of forty-nine, an émigrée at Saint-Petersburg; the climate killed her. She must be very cold in her coffin! I have often thought of going to bring her away and lay her in our beloved Brittany, near me! But she rests in my heart!"

The Chevalier wiped his eyes; Calyste took his hands and pressed them.

"I cling to that dog more than to my life," said he, pointing to Thisbe. "That little creature is in every particular exactly like the dog she used to fondle with her beautiful hands, and to take on her knees. I never look at Thisbe without seeing Madame de Kergarouët's hands."

"Have you seen Madame de Rochefide?" asked Calyste.

"No," replied du Halga. "It is fifty-eight years now since I looked at a woman, excepting your mother; there is something in her coloring that is like the Admiral's wife."

Three days later the Chevalier said to Calyste as they met on the Mall:

"My boy, all I have in the world is a hundred and eighty louis. When you know where to find Madame de Rochefide, come and ask me for them, to go to see her."

Calyste thanked the old man, whose life he envied. But day by day he became more morose; he seemed to care for no one; he was gentle and kind only to his mother. The Baroness watched the progress of this mania with increasing anxiety; she alone, by much entreaty, could persuade Calyste to take some nourishment.

By the beginning of October the young fellow could no longer walk on the Mall with the Chevalier, who came in vain to ask him out with an old man's attempts at coaxing.

"We will talk about Madame de Rochefide," said he. "I will tell you the history of my first adventure.—Your son is very ill," said he to the Baroness, on the day when his urgency proved useless.

Calyste replied to all who questioned him that he was perfectly well, and, like all melancholy youths, relished the notion of death; but he never left the house now; he sat in the garden on the seat, warming himself in the pale, mild autumn sunshine, alone with his thoughts, and avoiding all company.

After the day when Calyste no longer went to call on her, Félicité begged the curé of Guérande to go to see her. The Abbé Grimont's regularity in going to les Touches almost

every morning, and dining there from time to time, became the news of the moment; it was talked of in all the neighborhood, and even at Nantes. However, he never missed spending the evening at Guérande, where despair reigned. Masters and servants, all were grieved by Calyste's obstinacy, though they did not think him in any danger. It never occurred to any one of these good people that the poor youth could die of love. The Chevalier had no record of such a death in all his travels or reminiscences. Everybody ascribed Calyste's emaciation to want of nutrition. His mother would go on her knees to beseech him to eat. To please her, Calyste tried to overcome his repugnance, and the food thus taken against his will added to the low fever that was consuming the handsome boy.

At the end of October the beloved son no longer went up to his room on the second floor; he had his bed brought down into the sitting-room, and lay there generally, in the midst of the family, who at last sent for the Guérande doctor.

The medical man tried to check the fever by quinine, and for a few days it yielded to the treatment. The doctor also ordered Calyste to take exercise, and to amuse himself. The Baron rallied his strength, and shook off his torpor; he grew young as his son grew old. He took out Calyste, Gasselin, and the two fine sporting dogs. Calyste obeyed his father, and for a few days the three men went out together; they went through the forest and visited his friends in neighboring châteaux; but Calyste had no spirit, no one could beguile him of a smile, his pale rigid face revealed a perfectly passive creature.

The Baron, broken by fatigue, fell into a state of collapse, and was forced to come home, bringing Calyste with him in the same condition. Within a few days both father and son were so ill that, at the request of the Guérande doctor himself, the two first physicians of Nantes were called in. The Baron had been quite knocked over by the visible alteration in Calyste. With the terrible prescience that nature bestows on the dying, he trembled like a child at the thought that his

family would be extinct; he said nothing, he only clasped his hands, praying as he sat in his chair, to which he was tied by weakness. He sat facing the bed occupied by Calyste, and watched him constantly. At his child's slightest movement he was greatly agitated, as if the flame of his life were fluttered by it.

The Baroness never left the room, and old Zéphirine sat knitting by the fire in a state of agonizing anxiety. She was constantly being asked for wood, for the father and son both felt the cold, and her stores were invaded. She had made up her mind to give up her keys, for she was no longer brisk enough to go with Mariotte; but she insisted on knowing everything; every minute she questioned Mariotte or her sister-in-law, and would take them aside to hear about the state of her brother and nephew.

One evening, when Calyste and his father were dozing, old Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël remarked that they would no doubt have to resign themselves to losing the Baron, whose face was quite white, and had assumed a waxen look. Mademoiselle du Guénic dropped her knitting, fumbled in her pocket, and pulled out an old rosary of black wooden beads, which she proceeded to tell with a fervency that gave such a glory of energy to her ancient parched features, that the other old maid followed her example; and then, at a sign from the curé, they all united in the silent exaltation of the old blind lady.

"I was the first to pray to God," said the Baroness, remembering the fateful letter written by Calyste, "but He did not hear me!"

"Perhaps," said the Abbé Grimont, "we should be wise to beg Mademoiselle des Touches to come to see Calyste."

"She!" cried old Zéphirine, "the author of all our woes, she who lured him away from his family, who tore him from us, who made him read impious books, who taught him the language of heresy! Curse her, and may God never forgive her! She has crushed the du Guénics!"

"She may perhaps raise them up again," said the curé in

a mild voice. "She is a saintly and virtuous woman: I am her warranty. She has none but good intentions as regards Calyste. May she be able to realize them!"

"Give me notice the day she is to set foot here, and I will go out," cried the old lady. "She has killed both father and son. Do you suppose I cannot hear how weak Calyste's voice is?—he hardly has strength to speak."

Just then the three physicians came in. They wearied Calyste with questions. As to his father, their examination was brief; they knew all in a moment; the only wonder was that he still lived. The Guérande doctor quietly explained to the Baroness that it would probably be necessary to take Calyste to Paris to consult the most eminent authorities, for that it would cost more than a hundred louis to bring them to Guérande.

"A man must die of something, but love is nothing," said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël.

"Alas, whatever the cause may be, Calyste is dying," said his mother. "I recognize every symptom of consumption, the most horrible malady of my native land."

"Calyste is dying?" said the Baron, opening his eyes, whence trickled two large tears which, caught in the many furrows of his face, slowly fell to the bottom of his cheeks—the only tears, no doubt, that he had ever shed in his life.

He dragged himself on to his feet, shuffled to his son's bed, took his hands, and looked at him.

"What do you want, father?" said the boy.

"I want you to live!" cried the Baron.

"I cannot live without Béatrix," said Calyste to the old man, who sank back into his chair.

"Where can I find a hundred louis to fetch the doctors from Paris?" cried the Baroness. "We have yet time."

"A hundred louis!" exclaimed Zéphirine. "Will they save him?"

Without waiting for her sister-in-law's reply, the old woman put her hands into her pocket-holes and untied an under petticoat, which fell with a heavy sound. She knew so well

where she had sewn in her louis, that she ripped them out with a rapidity that seemed magical. The gold pieces rang as they dropped one by one. Old Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël looked on with stupefied amazement.

"They can see you!" she whispered in her friend's ear.

"Thirty-seven," said Zéphirine, counting the gold.

"Every one will know how much you have."

"Forty-two."

"Double louis, and all new! how did you get them, you who cannot see them?"

"I could feel them.—Here are a hundred and four louis," cried Zéphirine. "Is that enough?"

"What are you doing?" asked the Chevalier du Halga, coming in, and unable to imagine what was the meaning of the old lady's holding out her lap full of louis d'or.

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël explained the case in two words.

"I had heard of it," said he, "and I came to bring you a hundred and forty louis I had kept at Calyste's service, as he knows."

The Chevalier took out of his pocket two rolls of coin, which he showed them. Mariotte, seeing all these riches, bid Gasselin lock the door.

"Gold will not restore him to health," said the Baroness, in tears.

"But it may enable him to run after his Marquise," said du Halga. "Come, Calyste!"

Calyste sat up in bed, and exclaimed gleefully:

"Let us be off!"

"Then he will live," said the Baron, in a stricken voice, "and I may die.—Go and fetch the curé."

These words struck them all with terror. Calyste, seeing his father turn ghastly pale from the painful agitation of this scene, could not restrain his tears. The curé, who knew the decision the doctors had come to, had gone off to fetch Mademoiselle des Touches; for at this moment he displayed as much admiration for her as he had not long since felt repugnance, and could defend her as a pastor defends one of the favorites of his flock.

On hearing of the Baron's desperate extremity, a crowd gathered in the little street; the peasants, the marshmen, and the townsfolk all kneeling in the courtyard, while the priest administered the last sacrament to the old Breton warrior. Everybody was deeply touched to think of the father dying by the bed of his sick son. The extinction of the old family was regarded as a public calamity.

The ceremony struck Calyste; for a while his grief silenced his passion. All through the death struggles of this heroic defender of the Monarchy he remained on his knees, watching the approach of death, and weeping.

The old man died in his chair, in the presence of the assembled family.

"I die faithful to the King and religion. Great God, as the reward of my efforts, let Calyste live!" he said.

"I will live, father, and obey you," replied the young man.

"If you would make my death as easy as Fanny has made my life, swear that you will marry."

"I promise it, father."

It was touching to see Calyste, or rather his ghost, leaning on the old Chevalier, a spectre leading a shade, following the Baron's bier as chief mourner. The church and the little square before the porch were full of people, who had come from ten leagues round.

The Baroness and Zéphirine were deeply grieved when they saw that, in spite of his efforts to obey his father, Calyste was still sunk in an ominous stupor. On the first day of their mourning the Baroness led her son to the seat at the bottom of the garden, and questioned him. Calyste replied with gentle submissiveness, but his answers were heartbreaking.

"Mother," said he, "there is no life left in me; what I eat does not nourish me, the air I breathe into my lungs does not renew my blood; the sun seems cold to me, and when it shines for you on the front of the house as at this moment, where you see carvings bathed in light, I see dim forms wrapped in mist. If Béatrix were here, all would be bright once more.

There is but one thing in the world that has her color and form—this flower and these leaves," and he drew out of his bosom the withered blossoms that the Marquise had given him.

The Baroness dared ask him no more; the madness betrayed by his replies seemed worse than the sorrow of his silence.

But Calyste was thrilled as he caught sight of Mademoiselle des Touches through the windows at opposite ends of the room. Félicité reminded him of Béatrix. Thus it was to her that the two women owed the one gleam of joy that lightened their griefs.

"Well, Calyste," said Mademoiselle des Touches, when she saw him, "the carriage is ready; we will go together and find Béatrix. Come."

The pale, thin face of the boy, all in black, was brightened by a flush, and a smile dawned on his features.

"We will save him!" said Mademoiselle des Touches to the mother, who wrung her hand, shedding tears of joy.

A week after the Baron's death, Mademoiselle des Touches, the Baronne du Guénic, and Calyste set out for Paris, leaving the business matters in the hands of old Mademoiselle.

Félicité's affection for Calyste had planned a brilliant future for the poor boy. She was connected with the Grandlieus, and the ducal branch was ending in a family of five daughters. She had written to the Duchesse de Grandlieu, telling her the whole story of Calyste, and announcing her intention of selling her house in the Rue du Mont-Blanc, for which a company of speculators had offered two million five hundred thousand francs. Her business manager had already bought for her one of the finest houses in the Rue de Bourbon, at a cost of seven hundred thousand francs. Out of the surplus money from the sale of the house in the Rue du Mont-Blanc she meant to devote one million to repurchasing the estates of the du Guénics, and would leave the rest of her fortune among the five de Grandlieu girls.

Félicité knew the plans made by the Duke and Duchess, who intended that their youngest daughter should marry the Vicomte de Grandlieu, the heir to their titles; Clotilde-Frédérique, the second, meant, she knew, to remain unmarried, without taking the veil, however, as her eldest sister had done; so the only one to be disposed of was Sabine, a pretty creature just twenty years of age, on whom she counted to cure Calyste of his passion for Madame de Rochefide.

During their journey Félicité told Madame du Guénic of all these plans. The house in the Rue de Bourbon was now being furnished, and in it Calyste was to live if these schemes should succeed.

They all three went straight to the Hôtel Grandlieu, where the Baroness was received with all the respect due to her name as a girl and as a wife. Mademoiselle des Touches, of course, advised Calyste to see all he could of Paris while she made inquiries as to where Béatrix might be, and she left him to the fascinations of every kind which awaited him there. The Duchess, her daughters, and their friends did the honors of the capital for Calyste just at the season when it was beginning to be gayest.

The bustle of Paris entirely diverted the young Breton's mind. He fancied there was some likeness in the minds of Madame de Rochefide and Sabine de Grandlieu, who at that time was certainly one of the loveliest and most charming girls in Paris society, and he thenceforward paid an amount of attention to her advances which no other woman would have won from him. Sabine de Grandlieu played her part all the more successfully because she liked Calyste.

Matters were so skilfully managed that in the course of the winter of 1837 the young Baron, who had recovered his color and youthful beauty, could listen without disgust when his mother reminded him of his promise to his dying father, and spoke of his marrying Sabine de Grandlieu. Still, while keeping his promise, he concealed an indifference which the Baroness could discern, while she hoped it might be dispelled by the satisfactions of a happy home.

On the day when the Grandlieu family and the Baroness, supported on this occasion by her relations from England, held a sitting in the large drawing-room of the Duke's house, while Leopold Hannequin, the family notary, explained the conditions of the marriage contract before reading it through, Calyste, whose brow was clouded, as all could see, refused point-blank to accept the benefactions offered to him by Mademoiselle des Touches. He still trusted to Félicité's devotion, and believed that she was seeking Béatrix.

At this moment, in the midst of the dismay of both families, Sabine came in, dressed so as to remind Calyste of the Marquise de Rochefide, though her complexion was dark, and she placed in Calyste's hand the following letter:—

Camille to Calyste.

"Calyste, before retiring into my cell as a novice, I may be allowed to glance back at the world I am quitting to enter the world of prayer. This glance is solely for you, who in these later days have been all the world to me. My voice will reach you, if I have calculated exactly, in the middle of a ceremony which I could not possibly witness. On the day when you stand before the altar, to give your hand to a young and lovely girl who is free to love before Heaven and the world, I shall be in a religious house at Nantes—before the altar too, but plighted for ever to Him who can never deceive nor disappoint.

"I write, not to sadden you, but to beseech you not to allow any false delicacy to hinder the good I have always wished to do you since our first meeting. Do not deny the right I have so hardly earned. If love is suffering, then I have loved you well, Calyste; but you need feel no remorse. The only pleasures I have known in my life I owe to you, and the pain has come from myself. Compensate me for all this past suffering by giving me one eternal joy. Let me, dear, be in some sort a perfume in the flowers of your life, and mingle with it always without being importunate. I shall certainly owe to

you my happiness in life eternal; will you not let me pay my debt by the offering of some transient and perishable possessions? You will not fail in generosity? You will not regard this as the last subterfuge of scorned love?

"Calyste, the world was nothing to me without you; you made it a fearful desert, and you have led the infidel Camille Maupin, the writer of books and dramas, which I shall solemnly disown—you have led that audacious and perverted woman, tied hand and foot, to the throne of God. I am now, what I ought always to have been, an innocent child. Yes, I have washed my robes in the tears of repentance, and I may go to the altar presented by an angel—by my dearly-loved Calyste! How sweet it is to call you so—now that my resolution has sanctified the word. I love you without self-interest, as a mother loves her son, as the Church loves her children. I can pray for you and yours without the infusion of a single desire but that for your happiness.

"If you knew the supreme peace in which I live after having lifted myself by thought above the petty interests of the world, and how exquisite is the feeling of having done one's duty, in accordance with your noble motto, you would enter on your happy life with a firm step, nor glance behind nor around you. So I am writing to beseech you to be true to yourself and to your family.

"My dear, the society in which you must live cannot exist without the religion of duty; and you will misunderstand life, as I have misunderstood it, if you give yourself up to passion and to fancy as I have done. Woman can only be equal with man by making her life a perpetual sacrifice, as man's must be perpetual action. Now my life has been, as it were, one long outbreak of egoism. God perhaps brought you in its evening to my door, as a messenger charged with my punishment and pardon. Remember this confession from a woman to whom fame was a pharos whose light showed her the right way. Be great! sacrifice your fancy to your duties as the head of a house, as husband and father. Raise the downtrodden banner of the old du Guénics; show the present age, when principles

and religion are denied, what a gentleman may be in all his glory and distinction.

"Dear child of my soul, let me play the mother a little: the angelic Fanny will not be jealous of a woman dead to the world, of whom you will henceforth know nothing but that her hands are always raised to Heaven. In these days the nobility need fortune more than ever, so accept a part of mine, dear Calyste, and make a good use of it. It is not a gift; it is trust-money. I am thinking more of your children and your old Breton estate than of yourself when I offer you the interest which time has accumulated for me on my Paris property."

"I am ready to sign," said the young Baron, to the great delight of the assembly.

PART III

RETROSPECTIVE ADULTERY

THE week after this, when the marriage service had been celebrated at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, at seven in the morning—as was the custom in some families of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—Calyste and Sabine got into a neat traveling-carriage in the midst of the embracing, congratulations, and tears of a score of persons gathered in groups under the awning of the Hôtel de Grandlieu. The congratulations were offered by the witnesses and the men; the tears were to be seen in the eyes of the Duchesse de Grandlieu and her daughter Clotilde—both tremulous, and from the same reflection.

"Poor Sabine! she is starting in life at the mercy of a man who is married not altogether willingly."

Marriage does not consist solely of pleasures, which are as fugitive under those conditions as under any others; it involves a consonance of tempers and physical sympathies, a concord of character, which make this social necessity an ever new problem. Girls to be married know the conditions and dangers of this lottery fully as well as their mothers do; this is why women shed tears as they look on at a marriage, while men smile; the men think they risk nothing; the women know pretty well how much they risk.

In another carriage, which had started first, was the Baronne du Guénic, to whom the Duchess had said at parting:

"You are a mother though you have only a son. Try to fill my place to my darling Sabine."

On the box of that carriage sat a groom serving as a courier, and behind it two ladies'-maids. The four postilions, in splendid liveries—each carriage having four horses—all had

nosegays in their button-holes and favors in their hats. The Duc de Grandlieu, even by paying them, had the greatest difficulty in persuading them to remove the ribands. The French postilion is eminently intelligent, but he loves his joke; and these took the money, and replaced the favors outside the city walls.

"Well, well, good-bye, Sabine!" said the Duchess. "Remember your promise, and write often.—Calyste, I say no more, but you understand me."

Clotilde, leaning on the arm of her youngest sister Athénaïs, who was smiling at the Vicomte Juste de Grandlieu, gave the bride a keen glance through her tears, and watched the carriage till it disappeared amid the repeated salvo of four postilions' whips, noisier than pistol shots. In a very short time the gay procession reached the Esplanade of the Invalides, followed the Quay to the Pont d'Iéna, the Passy Gate, the Versailles avenue, and, finally, the highroad to Brittany.

Is it not strange, to say the least, that the artisan class of Switzerland and Germany, and the greatest families of France and England, obey the same custom, and start on a journey after the nuptial ceremony? The rich pack themselves into a box on wheels. The poor walk gaily along the roads, resting in the woods, feeding at every inn, so long as their glee, or rather their money, holds out. A moralist would find it difficult to decide which is the finest flower of modesty—that which hides from the public eye, inaugurating the domestic hearth and bed as the worthy citizen does, or that which flies from the family and displays itself in the fierce light of the highroad to the eyes of strangers? Refined natures must crave for solitude, and avoid the world and the family alike. The rush of love that begins a marriage is a diamond, a pearl, a gem cut by the highest of all arts, a treasure to be buried deep in the heart.

Who could tell the tale of a honeymoon excepting the bride? And how many women would here admit that this period of uncertain duration—sometimes of only a single night—is the preface to married life? Sabine's first three

letters to her mother betrayed a state of things which, unfortunately, will not seem new to some young wives, nor to many old women. All who have become sick-nurses, so to speak, to a man's heart have not found it out so quickly as Sabine did. But the girls of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, when they are keen-witted, are women already in mind. Before marriage, they have received the baptism of fine manners from the world and from their mothers. Duchesses, anxious to perpetuate the tradition, are often unaware of all the bearings of their lessons when they say to their daughters —"No one ever does that."—"Do not laugh at such things."—"You must never fling yourself on a sofa, you must sit down quietly."—"Never do such a thing again."—"It is most incorrect, my dear!" and so forth.

And critical middle-class folks refuse to recognize any innocence or virtue in young creatures who, like Sabine, are virgin souls, but perfected by cleverness, by the habits of good style, and good taste, knowing from the age of sixteen how to use an opera glass. Sabine, to lend herself to Mademoiselle des Touches' schemes for her marriage, could not but be of the school of Mademoiselle de Chaulieu. This innate mother-wit, these gifts of birth, may perhaps make this young wife as interesting as the heroine of the *Mémoires de deux jeunes Mariées,* in which we see the vanity of such social advantages in the great crisis of married life, where they are often crushed under the double weight of unhappiness and passion.

I

To Madame la Duchesse de Grandlieu

GUÉRANDE, *April* 1838.

"DEAR MOTHER,—You can easily understand why I did not write to you on the journey; one's mind turns like the wheels. So here I have been these two days in the depths of Brittany, at the Hôtel du Guénic, a house carved all over like a cocoanut box. Notwithstanding the affectionate at-

tentions of Calyste's family, I feel an eager longing to fly away to you, and tell you a thousand things which I feel can only be told to a mother.

"Dear mamma, Calyste married me cherishing a great sorrow in his soul; we all of us know it, and you did not disguise the difficulties of my position; but, alas! they are greater than you imagined. Oh, dear mamma, how much experience we may acquire in a few days—why should I not say to you in a few hours? All your counsels proved useless, and you will understand why by this simple fact: I love Calyste as if he were not my husband. That is to say, if I were married to another man and were traveling with Calyste, I should love him and hate my husband. Consider him, then, as a man loved entirely, involuntarily, absolutely, and as many more adverbs as you choose to supply. So, in spite of your warnings, my slavery is an established fact.

"You advised me to keep myself lofty, haughty, dignified, and proud, in order to bring Calyste to a state of feeling which should never undergo any changes throughout life; in the esteem and respect which must sanctify the wife in the home and family. You spoke warmly, and with reason, no doubt, against the young women of the day who, under the excuse of living on good terms with their husbands, begin by being docile, obliging, submissive, with a familiarity, a free-and-easyness which are, in your opinion, rather too *cheap* —a word I own to not understanding yet, but we shall see by and by—and which, if you are right, are only the early and rapid stages towards indifference and perhaps contempt.

" 'Remember that you are a Grandlieu,' you said in my ear.

"This advice, full of the maternal eloquence of Dedalus, has shared the fate of mythological things. Dear, darling mother, could you believe that I should begin by the catastrophe which, according to you, closes the honeymoon of the young wives of our day?

"When Calyste and I were alone in the carriage, each thought the other as silly as himself, as we both perceived

the importance of the first word, the first look; and each, bewildered by the marriage sacrament, sat looking out of a window. It was so preposterous that, as we got near the city gate, Monsieur made me a little speech in a rather broken voice—a speech prepared, no doubt, like all extempore efforts, to which I listened with a beating heart, and which I take the liberty of epitomizing for your benefit.

"'My dear Sabine,' said he, 'I wish you to be happy, and, above all, to be happy in your own way,' said he. 'In our position, instead of deceiving each other as to our characters and sentiments by magnanimous concessions, let us both be now what we should be a few years hence. Regard me as being your brother, as I would wish to find a sister in you.'

"Though this was most delicately meant, I did not find in this first speech of married love anything answering to the eagerness of my soul, and, after replying that I felt quite as he did, I remained pensive. After this declaration of rights to be equally cold, we talked of the weather, the dust, the houses, and the scenery with the most gracious politeness, I laughing a rather forced laugh, he lost in dreams.

"Finally, as we left Versailles, I asked Calyste pointblank —calling him 'my dear Calyste,' as he called me 'my dear Sabine'—if he could tell me the history of the events which had brought him to death's door, and to which I owed the honor of being his wife. He hesitated for a long time. In fact, it was the subject of a little discussion lasting through three stages; I trying to play the part of a wilful girl determined to sulk; he debating with himself on the ominous question asked as a challenge to Charles X. by the public press: 'Will the King give in?' At last, when we had left Verneuil, and after swearing often enough to satisfy three dynasties that I would never remind him of his folly, never treat him coldly, and so on, he painted his passion for Madame de Rochefide: 'I do not wish,' he said, in conclusion, 'that there should be any secrets between us.'

"Poor dear Calyste did not know, I suppose, that his friend

Mademoiselle des Touches and you had been obliged to tell me all; for a girl cannot be dressed as I was on the day of the contract without being taught her part.

"I cannot but tell everything to so good a mother as you are. Well, then, I was deeply hurt at seeing that he had yielded far less to my request than to his own wish to talk about the unknown object of his passion. Will you blame me, dearest mother, for having wanted to know the extent of this sorrow, of the aching wound in his heart of which you had told me?

"Thus, within eight hours of having been blessed by the Curé of Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, your Sabine found herself in the rather false position of a young wife hearing from her husband's own lips his confidences as to a cheated passion and the misdeeds of a rival. Yes, I was playing a part in the drama of a young wife, officially informed that she owed her marriage to the disdain of an old beauty!

"By this narrative I gained what I sought. 'What?' you will ask. Oh, my dear mother! on clocks and chimney-carvings I have often enough seen Loves leading each other on, hand-in-hand, to put the lesson into practice! Calyste ended the romance of his memories with the most vehement protestations that he had entirely got over what he called his madness. Every protest needs a signature. The happy hapless one took my hand, pressed it to his lips, and then held it for a long time. A declaration followed. This one seemed to me more suitable than the first to our position as man and wife, though our lips did not utter a single word. This happiness I owed to my spirited indignation against the bad taste of a woman so stupid as not to love my handsome and delightful Calyste.

"I am called away to play a game of cards, which I have not yet mastered. I will continue my letter to-morrow. That I should have to leave you just now to make the fifth at a game of *mouche!* Such a thing is impossible anywhere but in the depths of Brittany.

"*May.*

"I resume the tale of my Odyssey. By the third day your children had dropped the ceremonial *vous* and adopted the lover-like *tu*. My mother-in-law, delighted to see us happy, tried to fill your place, dearest mother; and, as is always the case with those who take a part with the idea of effacing past impressions, she is so delightful that she has been almost as much to me as you could be. She, no doubt, guessed how heroic my conduct was; at the beginning of our journey she hid her anxiety too carefully not to betray it by her excessive precaution.

"When I caught sight of the towers of Guérande I said in your son-in-law's ear, 'Have you quite forgotten her?'

"And my husband, now my angel, had perhaps never known the depth of an artless and genuine affection, for that little speech made him almost crazy with joy.

"Unluckily, my desire to make him forget Madame de Rochefide led me too far. How could I help it! I love him, and I am almost Portuguese, for I am like you rather than my father. Calyste accepted everything, as spoilt children do; he is above everything an only son. Between you and me, I will never let my daughter—if I ever should have a daughter—marry an only son. It is quite enough to have to manage one tyrant, and in an only son there are several. And so we exchanged parts; I played the devoted wife. There are dangers in self-devotion to gain an end; it is loss of dignity. So I have to announce the wreck in me of that semi-virtue; dignity is really no more than a screen set up by pride, behind which we may fume at our ease. How could I help myself, mamma; you were not here, and I looked into a gulf. If I had maintained my dignity, I should have known the chill pangs of a sort of brotherliness, which would certainly have become simple indifference. And what future would have lain before me?

"As a result of my devotion, I am Calyste's slave. Shall I get out of that position? We shall see; for the present I like it. I love Calyste—I love him entirely with the frenzy

of a mother who thinks everything right that her son can do, even when he punishes her a little.

"*May* 15.

"So far, dear mother, marriage has come to me in a most attractive form. I lavish all my tenderest affection on the handsomest of men, who was thrown over by a fool for the sake of a wretched singer—for the woman is evidently a fool, and a fool in cold blood, the worst sort of fool. I am charitable in my lawful passion, and heal his scars while inflicting eternal wounds on myself. Yes, for the more I love Calyste, the more I feel that I should die of grief if anything put an end to our present happiness. And I am worshiped, too, by all the family, and by the little company that meets at the Hôtel du Guénic, all of them born figures in some ancient tapestry, and having stepped out of it to show that the impossible can exist. One day when I am alone I will describe them to you—Aunt Zéphirine, Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël, the Chevalier du Halga, the Demoiselles de Kergarouët, and the rest, down to the two servants, whom I shall be allowed, I hope, to take to Paris—Mariotte and Gasselin, who regard me as an angel alighted on earth from heaven, and who are still startled when I speak to them—they are all figures to put under glass shades.

"My mother-in-law solemnly installed us in the rooms she and her deceased husband had formerly inhabited. The scene was a touching one. 'I lived all my married life here,' said she, 'quite happy. May that be a happy omen for you, my dear children!'

"And she has taken Calyste's room. The saintly woman seemed to wish to divest herself of her memories and her admirable life as a wife to endow us with them.

"The province of Brittany, this town, this family with its antique manners—the whole thing, in spite of the absurdities, which are invisible to any but a mocking Parisian woman, has something indescribably grandiose, even in its details, to be expressed only by the word sacred. The tenants of the vast estates of the du Guénics, repurchased, as you know,

by Mademoiselle des Touches—whom we are to visit in the convent—all came out to receive us. These good folks in their holiday dresses, expressing the greatest joy at greeting Calyste as really their master once more, made me understand what Brittany is, and feudality, and old France. It was a festival I will not write about; I will tell you when we meet. The terms of all the leases have been proposed by the tenants themselves, and we are to sign after the tour of inspection we are to make round *our* lands that have been pledged this century and a half. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël tells us that these yeomen have assessed the returns with an accuracy that Paris folk would not believe in. We are to start three days hence, and ride everywhere.

"On my return I will write again, dear mother; but what can I have to say to you, since my happiness is already complete? So I must write what you know already, namely, how much I love you."

II

From the same to the same

"After playing the part of the Lady of the Castle, worshiped by her vassals as though the revolutions of 1830 and 1789 had never torn down our banners; after riding through woods, halting at farms, dining at old tables spread with cloths a century old, and groaning under Homeric dishes served in antediluvian plate; after drinking delicious wine out of goblets like those we see in the hands of conjurors; after salvos fired at dessert, and deafening shouts of 'Vive les du Guénics!' and balls, where the orchestra is a bagpipe, which a man blows at for ten hours on end! and such bouquets! and brides who insist on having our blessing! and healthy fatigue, cured by such sleep as I had never known, and a delicious waking to love as radiant as the sun that shines above us, twinkling on a myriad insects that hum in genuine Breton! Finally, after a grotesque visit to the Castle of du

Guénic, where the windows are open gates, and the cows might pasture on the grass grown in the halls; but we have vowed to restore it, and furnish it, so as to come here every year and be hailed by the vassals of the clan, one of whom carried our banner.—Ouf! here I am at Nantes.

"What a day we had when we went to le Guénic! The priest and all the clergy came out to meet us, all crowned with flowers, mother, and blessed us with such joy! The tears come into my eyes as I write about it. And my lordly Calyste played his part as a liege like a figure of Walter Scott's. Monsieur received homage as if we had stepped back into the thirteenth century. I heard girls and women saying, 'What a handsome master we have!' just like the chorus of a comic opera.

"The old folks discussed Calyste's likeness to the du Guénics whom they had known. Oh! Brittany is a noble and sublime country, a land of faith and religion. But progress has an eye on it; bridges and roads are to be made, ideas will invade it, and farewell to the sublime. The peasants will certainly cease to be as free and proud as I saw them when it has been proved to them that they are Calyste's equals, if, indeed, they can be brought to believe it.

"So after the poetry of this pacific restoration, when we had signed the leases we left that delightful country, flowery and smiling, gloomy and barren by turns, and we came here to kneel before her to whom we owe our good fortune, and give her thanks. Calyste and I both felt the need to thank the novice of the Visitation. In memory of her he will bear on his shield quarterly the arms of des Touches: *party per pale engrailed or and vert.* He will assume one of the silver eagles as a supporter, and place in its beak the pretty womanly motto, *'Souviègne-vous.'*—So we went yesterday to the Convent of the Ladies of the Visitation, conducted by the Abbé Grimont, a friend of the Guénic family; he told us that your beloved Félicité, dear mamma, is a saint; indeed, she can be no less to him, since this illustrious conversion has led to his being made vicar-general of the diocese. Mademoiselle

des Touches would not see Calyste; she received me alone. I found her a little altered, paler and thinner; she seemed extremely pleased by my visit.

" 'Tell Calyste,' said she in a low voice, 'that my not seeing him is a matter of conscience and self-discipline, for I have permission; but I would rather not purchase the happiness of a few minutes with months of suffering! Oh, if you could only know how difficult I find it to answer when I am asked, "What are you thinking about?" The mistress of the novices can never understand the vastness and multiplicity of the ideas which rush through my brain like a whirlwind. Sometimes I see Italy once more, or Paris, with all their display, always with Calyste, who,' she said with the poetic turn you know so well, 'is the sun of my memory. I was too old to be admitted to the Carmelites, so I chose the Order of Saint Francis de Sales, solely because he said, "I will have you bareheaded instead of barefoot!" disapproving of such austerities as only mortify the body. In fact, the head is the sinner. The holy Bishop did well to make his rule stern to the brain and merciless to the will!—This was what I needed, for my mind is the real culprit; it deceived me as to my heart till the age of forty, when, though we are sometimes for a moment forty times happier than younger women, we are sometimes fifty times more wretched.—Well, my child, and are you happy?' she ended by asking me, evidently glad to say no more about herself.

" 'You see me in a rapture of love and happiness,' I told her.

" 'Calyste is as kind and genuine as he is noble and handsome,' she said gravely. 'You are my heiress; you have, besides my fortune, the twofold ideal of which I dreamed.—I am glad of what I have done,' she added after a pause. 'Now, my child, do not be blinded. You have easily grasped happiness, you had only to put out your hand; now try to keep it. If you had come here merely to carry away the advice of my experience, your journey would be well rewarded. Calyste at this moment is fired by an infection of passion;

you did not inspire it. To make your happiness durable, dear child, strive to add this element to the former one. In your own interest and your husband's, try to be capricious, coy, a little severe if necessary. I do not advise a spirit of odious calculation, nor tyranny, but the science of conduct. Between usury and extravagance there is economy. Learn to acquire a certain decent control of your husband.

" 'These are the last worldly words I shall ever speak; I have been waiting to say them to you, for my conscience quaked at the notion of having sacrificed you to save Calyste; attach him to you, give him children, let him respect you as their mother.—Finally,' she added in an agitated voice, 'manage that he shall never see Béatrix again!'

"This name was enough to produce a sort of torpor in us both; we remained looking into each other's eyes, exchanging our vague sentiments of uneasiness.

" 'Are you going home to Guérande?' she asked.

" 'Yes,' said I.

" 'Well, never go to les Touches. I was wrong to give you the place.'

" 'Why?'

" 'Child, les Touches is for you a Bluebeard's cupboard, for there is nothing so dangerous as rousing a sleeping passion.'

"I have given you the substance of our conversation, my dear mother. If Mademoiselle des Touches made me talk, on the other hand she gave me much to think about—all the more because in the excitement of our travels, and my happiness with my Calyste, I had forgotten the serious matter of which I spoke in my first letter.

"After admiring Nantes, a delightful and splendid city; after going to see, in the Place de Bretagne, the spot where Charette so nobly fell, we arranged to return to Saint-Nazaire down the Loire, since we had already gone from Nantes to Guérande by the road. Public traveling is an invention of the modern monster the Monopole. Two rather pretty women belonging to Nantes were behaving rather noisily on deck,

suffering evidently from Kergarouëtism—a jest you will understand when I shall have told you what the Kergarouëts are. Calyste behaved very well. Like a true gentleman, he did not parade me as his wife. Though pleased by his good taste, like a child with his first drum, I thought this an admirable opportunity for practising the system recommended by Camille Maupin—for it was certainly not the novice that had spoken to me. I put on a little sulky face, and Calyste was very flatteringly distressed. In reply to his question, whispered in my ear, 'What is the matter?' I answered the truth:

"'Nothing whatever.'

"And I could judge at once how little effect the truth has in the first instance. Falsehood is a decisive weapon in cases where rapidity is the only salvation for a woman or an empire. Calyste became very urgent, very anxious. I led him to the forepart of the boat, among a mass of ropes, and there, in a voice full of alarms, if not of tears, I told him all the woes and fears of a woman whose husband happens to be the handsomest of men.

"'Oh, Calyste!' said I, 'there is one dreadful blot on our marriage. You did not love me! you did not choose me! You did not stand fixed like a statue when you saw me for the first time. My heart, my attachment, my tenderness cry out to you for affection, and some day you will punish me for having been the first to offer the treasure of my pure and involuntary girlish love! I ought to be grudging and capricious, but I have no strength for it against you.—If that odious woman who scorned you had been in my place now, you would not even have seen those two hideous provincial creatures who would be classed with cattle by the Paris *octroi.*'

"Calyste, my dear mother, had tears in his eyes and turned away to hide them; he saw la Basse Indre, and ran to desire the captain to put us on shore. No one can hold out against such a response, especially as it was followed by a stay of three hours in a little country inn, where we breakfasted off fresh fish, in a little room such as *genre* painters love, while

through the windows came the roar of the ironworks of Indret across the broad waters of the Loire. Seeing the happy result of the experiments of experience, I exclaimed, 'Oh, sweet Félicité!'

"Calyste, who of course knew nothing of the advice I had received, or of the artfulness of my behavior, fell into a delightful punning blunder by replying, 'Never let us forget it!—We will send an artist here to sketch the scene.'

"I laughed, dear mamma!—well, I laughed till Calyste was quite disconcerted and on the point of being angry.

" 'Yes,' said I, 'but there is in my heart a picture of this landscape, of this scene, which nothing can ever efface, and inimitable in its color.'

"Indeed, mother, I find it impossible to give my love the appearance of warfare or hostility. Calyste can do what he likes with me. That tear is, I believe, the first he ever bestowed on me! is it not worth more than a second declaration of a wife's rights? A heartless woman, after the scene on the boat, would have been mistress of the situation; I lost all I had gained. By your system, the more I am a wife, the more I become a sort of prostitute, for I am a coward in happiness; I cannot hold out against a glance from my lord. I do not abandon myself to love; I hug it as a mother clasps her child to her breast for fear of some harm."

III

From the same to the same

"*July*, GUÉRANDE.

"Oh! my dear mother, to be jealous after three months of married life! My heart is indeed full. I feel the deepest hatred and the deepest love.—I am worse than deserted, I am not loved!—Happy am I to have a mother, another heart to which I may cry at my ease.

"To us wives who are still to some extent girls, it is quite enough to be told—'Here, among the keys of your palace, is

one all rusty with remembrance; go where you will, enjoy everything, but beware of visiting les Touches'—to make us rush in hot-foot, our eyes full of Eve's curiosity. What a provoking element Mademoiselle des Touches had infused into my love! And why was I forbidden les Touches? What! does such happiness as mine hang on an excursion, on a visit to an old house in Brittany? What have I to fear?—In short, add to Mrs. Bluebeard's reasons the craving that gnaws at every woman's heart to know whether her power is precarious or durable, and you will understand why one day I asked, with an air of indifference:

"'What sort of place is les Touches?'

"'Les Touches is your own,' said my adorable mother-in-law.

"'Ah! If only Calyste had never set his foot there!——' said Aunt Zéphirine, shaking her head.

"'He would not now be my husband,' said I.

"'Then you know what happened there?' said my mother-in-law sharply.

"'It is a place of perdition,' said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël. 'Mademoiselle des Touches committed many sins there for which she now begs forgiveness of God.'

"'And has it not saved that noble creature's soul, besides making the fortune of the Convent?' cried the Chevalier du Halga. 'The Abbé Grimont tells me that she has given a hundred thousand francs to the Ladies of the Visitation.'

"'Would you like to go to les Touches?' said the Baroness. 'It is worth seeing.'

"'No, no!' cried I eagerly.

"Now, does not this little scene strike you as taken from some diabolical drama? And it was repeated under a hundred pretences. At last my mother-in-law said:

"'I understand why you should not wish to go to les Touches. You are quite right.'

"Confess, dear mamma, that such a stab, so unintentionally given, would have made you determine that you must know

whether your happiness really rested on so frail a basis that it must perish under one particular roof? I must do this justice to Calyste, he had never proposed to visit this retreat which is now his property. Certainly when we love, we become bereft of our senses, for his silence and reserve nettled me, till I said one day, 'What are you afraid of seeing at les Touches that you never mention it even?'

"'Let us go there,' said he.

"I was caught, as every woman is who wishes to be caught, and who trusts to chance to cut the Gordian knot of her hesitancy. So we went to les Touches.

"It is a delightful spot, most artistically tasteful, and I revel in the abyss whither Mademoiselle des Touches had warned me never to go. All poison-flowers are beautiful. The devil sows them—for there are flowers of Satan's and flowers from God! We have only to look into our own hearts to see that they went halves in the work of creation.—What bitter-sweet joys I found in this place where I played, not with fire but with ashes. I watched Calyste; I wanted to know if every spark was dead, and looked out for every chance draught of air, believe me! I noted his face as we went from room to room, from one piece of furniture to another, exactly like children seeking some hidden object. He seemed thoughtful; still, at first I fancied I had conquered. I felt brave enough to speak of Madame de Rochefide, who, since the adventure of her fall at le Croisic, is called Rocheperfide. Finally, we went to look at the famous box-shrub on which Béatrix was caught when Calyste pushed her into the sea that she might never belong to any man.

"'She must be very light to have rested there!' said I, laughing.

"Calyste said nothing. 'Peace to the dead,' I added.

"Still he was silent. 'Have I vexed you?' I asked.

"'No. But do not galvanize that passion,' he replied.

"What a speech!—Calyste, seeing it had saddened me, was doubly kind and tender to me.

"*August.*

"Alas! I was at the bottom of the pit and amusing myself, like the innocents in a melodrama, with plucking the flowers. Suddenly a horrible idea came galloping across my happiness like the horse in the German ballad. I fancied I could discern that Calyste's love was fed by his reminiscences, that he was wreaking on me the storms I could revive in him, by reminding him of that horrible coquette Béatrix.—That unwholesome, cold, limp, tenacious nature—akin to the mollusk and the coral insect—dares to be called Béatrix!

"So already, dear mother, I am forced to have an eye on a suspicion when my heart is wholly Calyste's, and is it not a terrible misfortune that the eye should get the better of the heart; that the suspicion, in short, has been justified?—And in this way:

"'I love this place,' I said to Calyste one morning, 'for I owe my happiness to it—so I forgive you for sometimes mistaking me for another woman——'

"My loyal Breton colored, and I threw my arms round his neck; but I came away from les Touches, and shall never go back there.

"The depth of my hatred, which makes me long for the death of Madame de Rochefide—oh dear, a natural death, of course, from a cold or some accident—revealed to me the extent and vehemence of my love for Calyste. This woman has haunted my slumbers; I have seen her in my dreams.—Am I fated to meet her?—Yes, the novice in the Convent was right; les Touches is a fatal spot. Calyste renewed his impressions there, and they are stronger than the pleasures of our love.

"Find out, my dear mother, whether Madame de Rochefide is in Paris; for if so, I shall remain on our estates in Brittany. Poor Mademoiselle des Touches, who is now sorry that she dressed me like Béatrix on the day when our marriage contract was signed, to carry out her scheme—if she could now know how completely I am a substitute for our odious rival!

What would she say! Why, it is prostitution! I am no longer myself! I am put to shame.—I am suffering from a mad desire to flee from Guérande and the sands of le Croisic.

"*August* 25.

"I am quite resolved to return to the ruins of le Guénic. Calyste, uneasy at seeing me so uneasy, is taking me thither. Either he does not know much of the world, or he guesses nothing; or, if he knows the reason of my flight, he does not love me. I am so afraid of discovering the hideous certainty if I seek it, that, like the children, I cover my eyes with my hands not to hear the explosion. Oh, mother! I am not loved with such love as I feel in my own heart. Calyste, to be sure, is charming; but what man short of a monster would not be, like Calyste, amiable and gracious, when he is given all the opening blossoms of the soul of a girl of twenty, brought up by you, pure as I am, and loving, and—as many women have told you—very pretty——"

"Le Guénic, *September 18th.*

"Has he forgotten her? This is the one thought which echoes like remorse in my soul. Dear mother, has every wife, like me, some such memory to contend with? Pure girls ought to marry none but innocent youths! And yet, that is an illusory Utopia; and it is better to have a rival in the past than in the future. Pity me, mamma, though at this moment I am happy; happy as a woman is who fears to lose her happiness and clings to it!—a way of killing it sometimes, says wise Clotilde.

"I perceive that for the last five months I have thought only of myself; that is, of Calyste. Tell my sister Clotilde that the dicta of her melancholy wisdom recur to me sometimes. She is happy in being faithful to the dead; she need fear no rival.

"A kiss to my dear Athénaïs; I see that Juste is madly in love with her. From what you say in your last letter, all he fears is that he may not win her. Cultivate that fear as a

precious flower. Athénaïs will be mistress; I, who dreaded lest I should not win Calyste from himself, shall be the handmaid. A thousand loves, dearest mother. Indeed, if my fears should not prove vain, I shall have paid very dear for Camille Maupin's fortune. Affectionate respects to my father."

These letters fully explain the secret attitude of this husband and wife. Where Sabine saw a love-match, Calyste saw a *mariage de convenance.* And the joys of the honeymoon had not altogether fulfilled the requirements of the law as to community of goods.

During their stay in Brittany the work of restoring, arranging, and decorating the Hôtel du Guénic in Paris had been carried on by the famous architect Grindot, under the eye of Clotilde and the Duchesse and Duc de Grandlieu. Every step was taken to enable the young couple to return to Paris in December 1838; and Sabine was glad to settle in the Rue de Bourbon, less for the pleasure of being mistress of the house than to discover what her family thought of her married life. Calyste, handsome and indifferent, readily allowed himself to be guided in matters of fashion by Clotilde and his mother-in-law, who were gratified by his docility. He filled the place in the world to which his name, his fortune, and his connection entitled him. His wife's success, regarded as she was as one of the most charming women of the year, the amusements of the best society, duties to be done, and the dissipations of a Paris season, somewhat recruited the happiness of the young couple by supplying excitement and interludes. The Duchess and Clotilde believed in Sabine's happiness, ascribing Calyste's cold manners to his English blood, and the young wife got over her gloomy notions; she heard herself envied by so many less happy wives, that she banished her terrors to the limbo of bad dreams. Finally, Sabine's prospect of motherhood was the crowning guarantee for the future of this neutral-tinted union, a good augury which women of experience rely on.

In October 1839 the young Baronne du Guénic had a son, and was so foolish as to nurse him herself, like almost every woman under similar circumstances. How can she help being wholly a mother when her child is the child of a husband so truly idolized? Thus by the end of the following summer Sabine was preparing to wean her first child.

In the course of a two years' residence in Paris, Calyste had entirely shed the innocence which had cast the light of its prestige on his first experience in the world of passion. Calyste, as the comrade of the young Duc de Maufrigneuse—like himself, lately married to an heiress, Bertha de Cinq-Cygne—of the Vicomte Savinien de Portenduère, of the Duc and Duchesse de Rhétoré, the Duc and Duchesse de Lenoncourt-Chaulieu, and all the company that met in his mother-in-law's drawing-room, learnt to see the differences that divide provincial from Paris life. Wealth has its dark hours, its tracts of idleness, for which Paris, better than any other capital, can provide amusement, diversion, and interest. Hence, under the influence of these young husbands, who would leave the noblest and most beautiful creatures for the delights of the cigar or of whist, for the sublime conversation at a club or the absorbing interests of the turf, many of the domestic virtues were undermined in the young Breton husband. The maternal instinct in a woman who cannot endure to bore her husband is always ready to support young married men in their dissipations. A woman is so proud of seeing the man she leaves perfectly free come back to her side.

One evening, in October this year, to escape the cries of a weaned child, Calyste—on whose brow Sabine could not bear to see a cloud—was advised by her to go to the Thèâtre des Variétés, where a new piece was being acted. The servant sent to secure a stall had taken one quite near to the stage-boxes. Between the first and second acts, Calyste, looking about him, saw in one of these boxes on the ground tier, not four yards away, Madame de Rochefide.

Béatrix in Paris! Béatrix in public! The two ideas

pierced Calyste's brain like two arrows. He could see her again after nearly three years!—Who can describe the commotion in the soul of this lover who, far from forgetting, had sometimes so completely identified Béatrix with his wife that Sabine had been conscious of it? Who can understand how this poem of a lost and misprized love, ever living in the heart of Sabine's husband, overshadowed the young wife's dutiful charms and ineffable tenderness? Béatrix became light, the day-star, excitement, life, the unknown; while Sabine was duty, darkness, the familiar! In that instant one was pleasure, the other satiety. It was a thunderbolt.

Sabine's husband in a loyal impulse felt a noble prompting to leave the house. As he went out from the stalls, the door of the box was open, and in spite of himself his feet carried him in. He found Béatrix between two very distinguished men, Canalis and Nathan—a politician and a literary celebrity. During nearly three years, since Calyste had last seen Madame de Rochefide, she had altered very much; but though the metamorphosis had changed the woman's nature, she seemed all the more poetical and attractive in Calyste's eyes. Up to the age of thirty, clothing is all a pretty Parisian demands of dress; but when she has crossed the threshold of the thirties, she looks to finery for armor, fascinations, and embellishment; she composes it to lend her graces; she finds a purpose in it, assumes a character, makes herself young again, studies the smallest accessories,—in short, abandons nature for art.

Madame de Rochefide had just gone through the changing scenes of the drama which, in this history of the manners of the French in the nineteenth century, is called "The Deserted Woman." Conti having thrown her over, she had naturally become a great artist in dress, in flirtation, and in artificial bloom of every description.

"How is it that Conti is not here," asked Calyste of Canalis in a whisper, after the commonplace greetings which begin the most momentous meeting when it takes place in public.

The erewhile poet of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, twice

minister, and now for the fourth time a speaker hoping for fresh promotion, laid his finger with meaning on his lips. This explained all.

"I am so glad to see you," said Béatrix, in a kittenish way. "I said to myself as soon as I saw you, before you saw me, that you, at any rate, would not disown me! Oh, my Calyste," she murmured in his ear, "why are you married?—and to such a little fool, too!"

As soon as a woman whispers to a newcomer in her box, and makes him sit down by her, men of breeding always find some excuse for leaving them together.

"Are you coming, Nathan?" said Canalis; "Madame la Marquise will excuse me if I go to speak a word to d'Arthez, whom I see with the Princesse de Cadignan. I must talk about a combination of speakers for to-morrow's sitting."

This retreat, effected with good taste, gave Calyste a chance of recovering from the shock he had sustained; but he lost all his remaining strength and presence of mind as he inhaled the, to him, intoxicating and poisonous fragrance of the poem called Béatrix.

Madame de Rochefide, who had grown bony and stringy, whose complexion was almost ruined, thin, faded, with dark circles round her eyes, had that evening wreathed the untimely ruin with the most ingenious devices of Parisian frippery. Like all deserted women, she had tried to give herself a virgin grace, and by the effect of various white draperies to recall the maidens of Ossian, with names ending in *a*, so poetically represented by Girodet. Her fair hair fell about her long face in bunches of curls, reflecting the flare of the footlights in the sheen of scented oil. Her pale forehead shone, she had applied an imperceptible touch of rouge over the dull whiteness of her skin, bathed in bran-water, and its brilliancy cheated the eye. A scarf, so fine that it was hard to believe that man could have woven it of silk, was wound about her neck so as to diminish its length by hiding it, and barely revealing the treasures enticingly displayed by her stays. The bodice was a masterpiece of art. As to her attitude, it is

enough to say that it was well worth the pains she had taken to elaborate it. Her arms, lean and hard, were scarcely visible through the carefully arranged puffs of her wide sleeves. She presented that mixture of false glitter and sheeny silk, of flowing gauze and frizzled hair, of liveliness, coolness, and movement which has been called *je ne sais quoi.* Every one knows what is meant by this *je ne sais quoi.* It is a compound of cleverness, taste, and temperament. Béatrix was, in fact, a drama, a *spectacle,* all scenery, and transformations, and marvelous machinery.

The performance of these fairy pieces, which are no less brilliant in dialogue, turns the head of a man blessed with honesty; for, by the law of contrast, he feels a frenzied desire to play with the artificial thing. It is false and seductive, elaborate, but pleasing, and there are men who adore these women who play at being charming as one plays a game of cards. This is the reason—man's desire is a syllogism, and argues from this external skill to the secret theorems of voluptuous enjoyment. The mind concludes, though not in words, "A woman who can make herself so attractive must have other resources of passion." And it is true. The women who are deserted are the women who love; the women who keep their lovers are those who know how to love. Now, though this lesson in Italian had been a hard one for Béatrix's vanity, her nature was too thoroughly artificial not to profit by it.

"It is not a matter of loving you men," she had been saying some minutes before Calyste went in; "we have to worry you when we have got you; that is the secret of keeping you. Dragons who guard treasures are armed with talons and wings!"

"Your idea might be put into a sonnet," Canalis was saying just as Calyste entered the box.

At one glance Béatrix read Calyste's condition; she saw, still fresh and raw, the marks of the collar she had put on him at les Touches. Calyste, offended by her phrase about his wife, hesitated between his dignity as a husband, defending Sabine, and finding a sharp word to cast on the heart

whence, for him, rose such fragrant reminiscences—a heart he believed to be yet bleeding. The Marquise discerned this hesitancy; she had spoken thus, solely to gauge the extent of her power over Calyste, and, seeing him so weak, she came to his assistance to get him out of his difficulty.

"Well, my friend," said she, when the two courtiers had left, "you see me alone—yes, alone in the world!"

"And you never thought of me?" said Calyste.

"You!" she replied; "are not you married?—It has been one of my great griefs among the many I have endured since we last met. 'Not merely have I lost love,' I said to myself, 'but friendship too, a friendship I believed to be wholly Breton.' We get used to anything. I now suffer less, but I am broken. This is the first time for a long while that I have unburdened my heart. Compelled to be reserved in the presence of indifferent persons, and as arrogant to those who court me as though I had never fallen, and having lost my dear Félicité, I have no ear into which to breathe the words, 'I am wretched!' And even now, can I tell you what my anguish was when I saw you a few yards away from me, not recognizing me; or what my joy is at seeing you close to me.—Yes," said she, at a movement on Calyste's part, "it is almost fidelity! In this you see what misfortune means! A nothing, a visit, is everything.

"Yes, you really loved me, as I deserved to be loved by the man who has chosen to trample on all the treasures I cast at his feet. And, alas! to my woe, I cannot forget; I love, and I mean to be true to the past, which can never return."

As she poured out this speech, a hundred times rehearsed, she used her eyes in such a way as to double the effect of words which seemed to surge up from her soul with the violence of a long-restrained torrent. Calyste, instead of speaking, let fall the tears that had been gathering in his eyes. Béatrix took his hand and pressed it, making him turn pale.

"Thank you, Calyste; thank you, my poor boy; that is the way a true friend should respond to a friend's sorrow. We

understand each other. There, do not add another word!—Go now; if we were seen, you might cause your wife grief if by chance any one told her that we had met—though innocently enough, in the face of a thousand people.—Good-bye, I am brave, you see—" And she wiped her eyes by what should be called in feminine rhetoric the antithesis of action.

"Leave me to laugh the laugh of the damned with the people I do not care for, but who amuse me," she went on. "I see artists and writers, the circle I knew at our poor Camille's—she was right, no doubt! Enrich the man you love, and then disappear, saying, 'I am too old for him!' It is to die a martyr. And that is best when one cannot die a virgin."

She laughed, as if to efface the melancholy impression she might have made on her adorer.

"But where can I call on you?" asked Calyste.

"I have hidden myself in the Rue de Courcelles, close to the Parc Monceaux, in a tiny house suited to my fortune, and I cram my brain with literature—but for my own satisfaction only, to amuse myself. Heaven preserve me from the mania of writing!—Go, leave me; I do not want to be talked about, and what will not people say if they see us together? And besides, Calyste, I tell you, if you stay a minute longer I shall cry, for I can't help it."

Calyste withdrew, after giving his hand to Béatrix, and feeling a second time the deep strange sensation of a pressure on both sides full of suggestive incitement.

"My God! Sabine never stirred my heart like this," was the thought that assailed him in the corridor.

Throughout the rest of the evening the Marquise de Rochefide did not look three times straight at Calyste; but she sent him side glances which rent the soul of the man who had given himself up wholly to his first and rejected love.

When the Baron du Guénic was at home again, the magnificence of his rooms reminded him of the sort of mediocrity to which Béatrix had alluded, and he felt a hatred for the fortune that did not belong to that fallen angel. On hearing that Sabine had been in bed some time, he was happy in having a night to himself to live in his emotions.

He now cursed the perspicacity given to Sabine by her affection. When it happens that a man is adored by his wife, she can read his face like a book, she knows the slightest quiver of his muscles, she divines the reason when he is calm, she questions herself when he is in the least sad, wondering if she is in fault, she watches his eyes; to her those eyes are colored by his ruling thought—they love or they love not. Calyste knew himself to be the object of a worship so complete, so artless, so jealous, that he doubted whether he could assume a countenance that would preserve the secret of the change that had come over him.

"What shall I do to-morrow morning?" said he to himself as he fell asleep, fearing Sabine's scrutiny.

For when they first met, or even in the course of the day, Sabine would ask him, "Do you love me as much as ever?" or, "I don't bore you?" Gracious questionings, varying according to the wife's wit or mood, and covering real or imaginary terrors.

A storm will stir up mud and bring it to the top of the noblest and purest hearts. And so, next morning, Calyste, who was genuinely fond of his child, felt a thrill of joy at hearing that Sabine was anxious as to the cause of some symptoms, and, fearing croup, could not leave the infant Calyste. The Baron excused himself on the score of business from breakfasting at home, and went out. He fled as a prisoner escapes, happy in the mere act of walking, in going across the Pont Louis XVI. and the Champs-Elysées to a café on the boulevard, where he breakfasted alone.

What is there in love? Does Nature turn restive under the social yoke? Does Nature insist that the spring of a devoted life shall be spontaneous and free, its flow that of a wild torrent tossed by the rocks of contradiction and caprice, instead of a tranquil stream trickling between two banks—the mairie on one side, and the church on the other? Has she schemes of her own when she is hatching those volcanic eruptions to which perhaps we owe our great men?

It would have been difficult to find a young man more piously brought up than Calyste, of purer life, or less tainted by infidelity; and he was rushing towards a woman quite unworthy of him, when a merciful and glorious chance brought to him, in Sabine, a girl of really aristocratic beauty, with a refined and delicate mind, pious, loving, and wholly attached to him; her angelic sweetness still touched with the pathos of love, passionate love in spite of marriage—such love as his for Béatrix.

The greatest men perhaps have still some clay in their composition; the mire still has charms. So, in spite of folly and frailty, the woman would then be the less imperfect creature. Madame de Rochefide in the midst of the crowd of artistic pretenders who surrounded her, and in spite of her fall, belonged to the highest nobility all the same; her nature was ethereal rather than earth-born, and she hid the courtesan she meant to be under the most aristocratic exterior. So this explanation cannot account for Calyste's strange passion.

The reason may perhaps be found in a vanity so deeply buried that moralists have not yet discerned that side of vice. There are men, truly noble as Calyste was, and as handsome, rich, elegant, and well bred, who weary—unconsciously perhaps—of wedded life with a nature like their own; beings whose loftiness is not amazed by loftiness, who are left cold by a dignity and refinement on a constant level with their own, but who crave to find in inferior or fallen natures a corroboration of their own superiority though they would not ask their praises. The contrast of moral degradation and magnanimity fascinates their sight. What is pure shines so vividly by the side of what is impure! This comparison is pleasing. Calyste found nothing in Sabine to protect; she was irreproachable; all the wasted energies of his heart went forth to Béatrix. And if we have seen great men playing the part of Jesus, raising up the woman taken in adultery, how should commonplace folks be any wiser?

Calyste lived till two o'clock on the thought, "I shall see her

again!"—a poem which ere now has proved sustaining during a journey of seven hundred leagues. Then he went with a light step to the Rue de Courcelles; he recognized the house though he had never seen it; and he, the Duc de Grandlieu's son-in-law, he, as rich, as noble as the Bourbons, stood at the foot of the stairs, stopped by the question from an old butler, "Your name, if you please, sir?"

Calyste understood that he must leave Madame de Rochefide free to act, and he looked out on the garden and the walls streaked with black and yellow lines left by the rain on the stucco of Paris.

Madame de Rochefide, like most fine ladies when they break their chain, had fled, leaving her fortune in her husband's hands, and she would not appeal for help to her tyrant. Conti and Mademoiselle des Touches had spared Béatrix all the cares of material life, and her mother from time to time sent her a sum of money. Now that she was alone, she was reduced to economy of a rather severe kind to a woman used to luxury. So she had taken herself to the top of the hill on which lies the Parc Monceaux, sheltering herself in a little old house of some departed magnate, facing the street, but with a charming little garden behind it, at a rent of not more than eighteen hundred francs. And still, with an old man-servant, a maid and a cook from Alençon, who had clung to her in her reverses, her poverty would have seemed opulence to many an ambitious middle-class housewife.

Calyste went up a flight of well-whitened stone stairs, the landings gay with flowers. On the first floor the old butler showed Calyste into the rooms through a double door of red velvet paneled with red silk and gilt nails. The rooms he went through were also hung with red silk and velvet. Dark-toned carpets, hangings across the windows and doors, the whole interior was in contrast with the outside, which the owner was at no pains to keep up.

Calyste stood waiting for Béatrix in a drawing-room, quiet in style, where luxury affected simplicity. It was hung with bright crimson velvet set off by cording of dull yellow silk;

the carpet was a darker red, the windows looked like conservatories, they were so crowded with flowers, and there was so little daylight, that he could scarcely see two vases of fine old red porcelain, and between them a silver cup attributed to Benvenuto Cellini, and brought from Italy by Béatrix. The furniture of gilt wood upholstered with velvet, the handsome consoles, on one of which stood a curious clock, the table covered with a Persian cloth, all bore witness to past wealth, of which the remains were carefully arranged. On a small table Calyste saw some trinkets, and a book half read, in which the place was marked by a dagger—symbolical of criticism—its handle sparkling with jewels. On the walls ten water-color drawings, handsomely framed, all representing bedrooms in various houses where Béatrix had lived in the course of her wandering life, gave an idea of her supreme impertinence.

The rustle of a silk dress announced the unfortunate lady, who appeared in a studied toilet, which, if Calyste had been an older hand, would certainly have shown him that he was expected. The dress, made like a dressing-gown to show a triangle of the white throat, was of pearl-gray watered silk with open hanging sleeves, showing the arms covered with an under sleeve made with puffs divided by straps, and with lace ruffles. Her fine hair, loosely fastened with a comb, escaped from under a cap of lace and flowers.

"So soon?" said she with a smile. "A lover would not have been so eager. So you have some secrets to tell me, I suppose?" And she seated herself on a sofa, signing to Calyste to take a place by her.

By some chance—not perhaps unintentional, for women have two kinds of memory, that of the angels and that of the devils—Béatrix carried about her the same perfume that she had used at les Touches when she had first met Calyste. The breath of this scent, the touch of that dress, the look of those eyes, which in the twilight seemed to focus and reflect light, all went to Calyste's brain. The unhappy fellow felt the same surge of violence as had already so nearly killed Béatrix; but now the Marquise was on the edge of a divan, not

of the ocean; she rose to ring the bell, putting her finger to her lips. At this Calyste, called to order, controlled himself; he understood that Béatrix had no hostile intentions.

"Antoine, I am not at home," she said to the old servant "Put some wood on the fire.—You see, Calyste, I treat you as a friend," she added with dignity when the old man was gone. "Do not treat me as your mistress.—I have two remarks to make. First, that I should not make any foolish stipulations with a man I loved; next, that I will never belong again to any man in the world. For I believed myself loved, Calyste, by a sort of Rizzio whom no pledges could bind, a man absolutely free, and you see whither that fatal infatuation has brought me.—As for you, you are tied to the most sacred duties; you have a young, amiable, delightful wife; and you are a father. I should be as inexcusable as you are, and we should both be mad——"

"My dear Béatrix, all your logic falls before one word. I have never loved any one on earth but you, and I married in spite of myself."

"A little trick played us by Mademoiselle des Touches," said she with a smile.

For three hours Madame de Rochefide kept Calyste faithful to his conjugal duties by pressing on him the horrible ultimatum of a complete breach with Sabine. Nothing less, she declared, could reassure her in the dreadful position in which she would be placed by Calyste's passion. And, indeed, she thought little of sacrificing Sabine; she knew her so well.

"Why, my dear boy, she is a woman who fulfils all the promise of her girlhood. She is a thorough Grandlieu, as brown as her Portuguese mother, not to say orange-colored, and as dry as her father. To speak the truth, your wife will never be lost to you; she is just a great boy, and can walk alone. Poor Calyste! is this the wife to suit you? She has fine eyes, but such eyes are common in Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Can a woman so lean be really tender? Eve was fair; dark women are descended from Adam, fair women from God, whose hand left a last touch on Eve when all creation was complete."

At about six o'clock Calyste in desperation took up his hat to go.

"Yes, go, my poor friend; do not let her have the disappointment of dining without you."

Calyste stayed. He was so young, so easy to take on the wrong side.

"You would really dare to dine with me?" said Béatrix, affecting the most provoking surprise. "My humble fare does not frighten you away, and you have enough independence of spirit to crown my joy by this little proof of affection?"

"Only let me write a line to Sabine," said he, "for she would wait for me till nine o'clock."

"There is my writing table," said Béatrix.

She herself lighted the candles, and brought one to the table to see what Calyste would write.

"My dear Sabine."

"My DEAR! Is your wife still dear to you?" said she, looking at him so coldly that it froze the marrow in his bones. "Go, then, go to dine with her."

"I am dining at an eating-house with some friends——"

"That is a lie. For shame! You are unworthy of her love or mine. All men are cowards with us. That will do, monsieur; go and dine with your dear Sabine!"

Calyste threw himself back in his armchair and turned paler than death. Bretons have a sort of obstinate courage which makes them hold their own under difficulties. The young Baron sat up again with his elbow firmly set on the table, his chin in his hand, and his sparkling eyes fixed on Béatrix, who was relentless. He looked so fine that a true northern or southern woman would have fallen on her knees, saying, "Take me!" But in Béatrix, born on the border between Normandy and Brittany, of the race of Casteran, desertion had brought out the ferocity of the Frank and the malignity of the Norman; she craved a tremendous and terrible revenge; she did not yield to his noble impulse.

"Dictate what I am to write, and I will obey," said the poor boy. "But then——"

"Then, yes," she replied, "for you will love me then as you loved me at Guérande.—Write, 'I am dining in town; do not wait.'"

"And——?" said Calyste, expecting something more.

"Nothing.—Sign it. Good," she said, seizing this note with covert joy. "I will send it by a messenger."

"Now!" cried Calyste, starting up like a happy man.

"I have preserved my liberty of action, I believe," said she, looking round, and pausing half-way between the table and the fireplace, where she was about to ring.

"Here, Antoine, have this note taken to the address.—Monsieur will dine with me."

Calyste went home about two in the morning.

After sitting up till half-past twelve, Sabine had gone to bed tired out. She slept, though she had been cruelly startled by the brevity of her husband's note; still, she accounted for it. True love in a woman can always explain everything to the advantage of the man she loves.

"Calyste was in a hurry!" thought she.

Next day the child had recovered, the mother's alarms were past. Sabine came in smiling, with little Calyste in her arms to show him to his father just before breakfast, full of the pretty nonsense, and saying the silly things that all young mothers are full of. This little domestic scene enabled Calyste to put a good face on matters, and he was charming to his wife while feeling that he was a wretch. He played like a boy himself with Monsieur le Chevalier; indeed, he overdid it, overacting his part; but Sabine had not reached that pitch of distrust in which a wife notes so subtle a shade.

At last, during breakfast, Sabine asked:

"And what were you doing yesterday?"

"Portenduère," said he, "kept me to dinner, and we went to the club to play a few rubbers of whist."

"It is a foolish life, my Calyste," replied Sabine. "The young men of our day ought rather to think of recovering all the estates in the country that their fathers lost. They cannot live by smoking cigars, playing whist, and dissipating their

idleness by being content with making impertinent speeches to the parvenus who are ousting them from all their dignities, by cutting themselves off from the masses, whose soul and brain they ought to be, and to whom they should appear as Providence. Instead of being a party, you will only be an opinion, as de Marsay said. Oh! if you could only know how my views have expanded since I have rocked and suckled your child. I want to see the old name of du Guénic figure in history."

Then, suddenly looking straight into Calyste's eyes, which were pensively fixed on her, she said:

"You must admit that the first note you ever wrote me was a little abrupt?"

"I never thought of writing till I reached the club."

"But you wrote on a woman's paper; it had some womanly scent."

"The club managers do such queer things——"

The Vicomte de Portenduère and his wife, a charming young couple, had become so intimate with the du Guénics that they shared a box at the Italian opera. The two young women, Sabine and Ursule, had been drawn into this friendship by a delightful exchange of advice, anxieties, and confidences about their babies. While Calyste, a novice in falsehood, was thinking to himself, "I must go to warn Savinien," Sabine was reflecting, "I fancied that the paper was stamped with a coronet!"

The suspicion flashed like lightning through her consciousness, and she blamed herself for it; but she made up her mind to look for the note, which, in the midst of her alarms on the previous day, she had tossed into her letter-box.

After breakfast Calyste went out, telling his wife he should soon return; he got into one of the little low one-horse carriages which were just beginning to take the place of the inconvenient cabriolet of our grandfathers. In a few minutes he reached the Rue des Saints-Pères, where the Vicomte lived, and begged him to do him the little kindness of lying in

case Sabine should question the Vicomtesse—he would do as much for him next time. Then, when once out of the house, Calyste, having first bidden the coachman to hurry as much as possible, went in a few minutes from the Rue des Saints-Pères to the Rue de Courcelles. He was anxious to know how Béatrix had spent the rest of the night.

He found the happy victim of fate just out of her bath, fresh, beautified, and breakfasting with a good appetite. He admired the grace with which his angel ate boiled eggs, and was delighted with the service of gold, a present from a music-mad lord for whom Conti had written some songs, on *ideas* supplied by his lordship, who had published them as his own. Calyste listened to a few piquant anecdotes related by his idol, whose chief aim was to amuse him, though she got angry and cried when he left her. He fancied he had been with her half an hour, and did not get home till three o'clock. His horse, a fine beast given him by the Vicomtesse de Grandlieu, looked as if it had come out of the river, it was so streaming with sweat.

By such a chance as a jealous woman always plans, Sabine was on guard at a window looking out into the courtyard, out of patience at Calyste's late return, and uneasy without knowing why. She was struck by the condition of the horse, its mouth full of foam.

"Where has he been?"

The question was whispered in her ear by that power which is not conscience—not the devil, nor an angel—the power which sees, feels, knows, and shows us the unknown; which makes us believe in the existence of spiritual beings, creatures of our own brain, going and coming, and living in the invisible spheres of ideas.

"Where have you come from, my darling?" said she, going down to the first landing to meet Calyste. "Abdel-Kader is half dead; you said you would be out but a few minutes, and I have been expecting you these three hours . . ."

"Well, well," said Calyste to himself, improving in the art of dissimulation, "I must get out of the scrape by a

present.—Dear little nurse," he said, putting his arm round his wife's waist with a more coaxing pressure than he would have given it if he had not felt guilty, "it is impossible, I see, to keep a secret, however innocent, from a loving wife . . ."

"We don't tell secrets on the stairs," she replied, laughing. "Come along!"

In the middle of the drawing-room that led to the bedroom, she saw, reflected in a mirror, Calyste's face, in which, not knowing that it could be seen, his fatigue and his real feeling showed; he had ceased to smile.

"That secret?" said she, turning round.

"You have been such a heroic nurse that the heir-presumptive of the du Guénics is dearer to me than ever; I wanted to surprise you—just like a worthy citizen of the Rue Saint-Denis. A dressing-table is being fitted for you which is a work of art—my mother and Aunt Zéphirine have helped—"

Sabine threw her arms around Calyste, and held him clasped to her heart, her head on his neck, trembling with the weight of happiness, not on account of the dressing-table, but because her suspicions were blown to the winds. It was one of those glorious gushes of joy which can be counted in a lifetime, and of which even the most excessive love cannot be prodigal, for life would be too quickly burnt out. Men ought, in such moments, to kneel at the woman's feet in adoration, for the impulse is sublime; all the powers of the heart and intellect overflow as water gushes from the urn of fountain-nymphs. Sabine melted into tears.

Suddenly, as if stung by a viper, she pushed Calyste from her, dropped on to a divan, and fainted away; the sudden chill on her glowing heart had almost killed her. As she held Calyste, her nose in his necktie, given up to happiness, she had smelt the same perfume as that on the notepaper!—Another woman's head had lain there, her face and hair had left the very scent of adultery. She had just kissed the spot where her rival's kisses were still warm.

"What is the matter?" said Calyste, after bringing Sabine

back to her senses by bathing her face with a wet handkerchief.

"Go and fetch the doctor, and the accoucheur—both. Yes, I feel the milk has turned to fever. . . . They will not come at once unless you go yourself——" *Vous,* she said, not *tu,* and the *vous* startled Calyste, who flew off in alarm. As soon as Sabine heard the outer gate shut, she sprang to her feet like a frightened deer, and walked round and round the room like a crazy thing, exclaiming, "My God! my God! my God!"

The two words took the place of thought. The crisis she had used as a pretext really came on. The hair on her head felt like so many eels, made red hot in the fire of nervous torment. Her heated blood seemed to her to have mingled with her nerves, and to be bursting from every pore. For a moment she was blind. "I am dying!" she shrieked.

At this fearful cry of an insulted wife and mother, her maid came in; and when she had been carried to her bed and had recovered her sight and senses, her first gleam of intelligence made her send the woman to fetch her friend Madame de Portenduère. Sabine felt her thoughts swirling in her brain like straws in a whirlwind.

"I saw myriads of them at once," she said afterwards.

Then she rang for the manservant, and in the transport of fever found strength enough to write the following note, for she was possessed by a mania, she must be sure of the truth:—

To Madame la Baronne du Guénic.

"Dear Mamma,—When you come to Paris, as you have led us to hope you may, I will thank you in person for the beautiful present by which you and Aunt Zéphirine and Calyste propose to thank me for having done my duty. I have been amply paid by my own happiness.—I cannot attempt to express my pleasure in this beautiful dressing-table, when you are here I will try to tell you. Believe me, when I dress before this glass, I shall always think, like the Roman lady, that my choicest jewel is our darling angel," and so on.

She had this letter posted by her own maid.

When the Vicomtesse de Portenduère came in, the shivering fit of a violent fever had succeeded the first paroxysm of madness.

"Ursule, I believe I am going to die," said she.

"What ails you, my dear?"

"Tell me, what did Calyste and Savinien do yesterday evening after dinner at your house?"

"What dinner?" replied Ursule, to whom her husband had as yet said nothing, not expecting an immediate inquiry. "Savinien and I dined alone last evening, and went to the Opera without Calyste."

"Ursule, dear child, in the name of your love for Savinien, I adjure you, keep the secret of what I have asked you, and what I will tell you. You alone will know what I am dying of —I am betrayed, at the end of three years—when I am not yet three-and-twenty——"

Her teeth chattered, her eyes were lifeless and dull; her face had the greenish hue and surface of old Venetian glass.

"You—so handsome!—But for whom!"

"I do not know. But Calyste has lied to me—twice. Not a word! Do not pity me, do not be indignant, affect ignorance; you will hear *who,* perhaps, through Savinien.—Oh! yesterday's note——"

And shivering in her shift, she flew to a little cabinet and took out the letter.

"A Marquise's coronet!" she said, getting into bed again. "Find out whether Madame de Rochefide is in Paris. Have I a heart left to weep or groan?—Oh, my dear, to see my beliefs, my poem, my idol, my virtue, my happiness, all, all destroyed, crushed, lost!—There is no God in Heaven now, no love on earth, no more life in my heart—nothing!—I do not feel sure of the daylight, I doubt if there is a sun.—In short, my heart is suffering so cruelly, that I hardly feel the horrible pain in my breast and my face. Happily the child is weaned. My milk would have poisoned him!" And at this thought, a torrent of tears relieved her eyes, hitherto dry.

Pretty Madame de Portenduère, holding the fatal note which Sabine had smelt at for certainty, stood speechless at this desperate woe, amazed by this death of love, and unable to say anything in spite of the incoherent fragments in which Sabine strove to tell her all. Suddenly Ursule was enlightened by one of those flashes which come only to sincere souls.

"I must save her!" thought she. "Wait till I return, Sabine," cried she. "I will know the truth."

"Oh, and I shall love you in my grave!" cried Sabine.

Madame de Portenduère went to the Duchess de Grandlieu, insisted on absolute secrecy, and informed her as to the state Sabine was in.

"Madame," said she, in conclusion, "are you not of opinion that, to save her from some dreadful illness, or perhaps even madness—who can tell?—we ought to tell the doctor everything, and invent some fables about that abominable Calyste, so as to make him seem innocent, at any rate, for the present?"

"My dear child," said the Duchess, who had felt a chill at this revelation, "friendship has lent you for the nonce the experience of a woman of my age. I know how Sabine worships her husband; you are right, she may go mad."

"And she might lose her beauty, which would be worse," said the Vicomtesse.

"Let us go at once!" cried the Duchess.

They, happily, were a few minutes in advance of the famous accoucheur Dommanget, the only one of the two doctors whom Calyste had succeeded in finding.

"Ursule has told me all," said the Duchess to her daughter. "You are mistaken. In the first place, Béatrix is not in Paris. As to what your husband was doing yesterday, my darling, he lost a great deal of money, and does not know where to find enough to pay for your dressing-table—"

"And this?" interrupted Sabine, holding out the note.

"This!" said the Duchess, laughing, "is Jockey Club paper. Every one writes on coroneted paper—the grocers will have titles soon——"

The prudent mother tossed the ill-starred document into the fire.

When Calyste and Dommanget arrived, the Duchess, who had given her orders, was informed; she left Sabine with Madame de Portenduère, and met the doctor and Calyste in the drawing-room.

"Sabine's life is in danger, monsieur," said she to Calyste. "You have been false to her with Madame de Rochefide"—Calyste blushed like a still decent girl caught tripping—"and as you do not know how to deceive," the Duchess went on, "you were so clumsy that Sabine's guessed everything. You do not wish my daughter's death, I suppose?—All this, Monsieur Dommanget, gives you a clew to my daughter's illness and its cause.—As for you, Calyste, an old woman like me can understand your error, but I do not forgive you. Such forgiveness can only be purchased by a life of happiness. If you desire my esteen, first save my child's life. Then forget Madame de Rochefide—she is good for nothing after the first time!—Learn to lie, have the courage and impudence of a criminal. I have lied, God knows! I, who shall be compelled to do cruel penance for such mortal sin."

She explained to him the fictions she had just invented. The skilful doctor, sitting by the bed, was studying the patient's symptoms, and the means of staving off the mischief. While he was prescribing measures, of which the success must depend on their immediate execution, Calyste, at the foot of the bed, kept his eyes fixed on Sabine, trying to give them an expression of tender anxiety.

"Then it is gambling that has given you those dark marks round your eyes?" she said in a feeble voice.

The words startled the doctor, the mother, and Ursule, who looked at each other; Calyste turned as red as a cherry.

"That comes of suckling your child," said Dommanget cleverly but roughly. "Then husbands are dull, being so much separated from their wives, they go to the club and play high. But do not lament over the thirty thousand francs that Monsieur le Baron lost last night——"

"Thirty thousand francs!" said Ursule like a simpleton.

"Yes, I know it for certain," replied Dommanget. "I heard this morning at the house of the Duchesse Berthe de Maufrigneuse that you lost the money to Monsieur de Trailles," he added to Calyste. "How can you play with such a man? Honestly, Monsieur le Baron, I understand your being ashamed of yourself."

Calyste, a kind and generous soul, when he saw his mother-in-law—the pious Duchess, the young Viscountess—a happy wife, and a selfish old doctor all lying like curiosity dealers, understood the greatness of the danger; he shed two large tears, which deceived Sabine.

"Monsieur," said she, sitting up in bed, and looking wrathfully at Dommanget, "Monsieur du Guénic may lose thirty, fifty, a hundred thousand francs if he chooses without giving any one a right to find fault with him or lecture him. It is better that Monsieur de Trailles should have won the money from him than that we, *we,* should have won from Monsieur de Trailles!"

Calyste rose and put his arm round his wife's neck. Kissing her on both cheeks, he said in her ear, "Sabine, you are an angel!"

Two days later the young Baroness was considered out of danger. On the following day Calyste went to Madame de Rochefide, and making a virtue of his infamy—

"Béatrix," said he, "you owe me much happiness. I sacrificed my poor wife to you, and she discovered everything. The fatal notepaper on which you made me write, with your initial and coronet on it, which I did not happen to see—I saw nothing but you! The letter B, happily, was worn away; but the scent you left clinging to me, the lies in which I entangled myself like a fool, have ruined my happiness. Sabine has been at death's door; the milk went to her brain, she has erysipelas, and will perhaps be disfigured for life. . . ."

Béatrix, while listening to this harangue, had a face of

Arctic coldness, enough to freeze the Seine if she had looked at it.

"Well, so much the better; it may bleach her a little, perhaps." And Béatrix, as dry as her own bones, as variable as her complexion, as sharp as her voice, went on in this tone, a tirade of cruel epigrams.

There can be no greater blunder than for a husband to talk to his mistress of his wife, if she is virtuous, unless it be to talk to his wife of his mistress if she is handsome. But Calyste had not yet had the sort of Parisian education which may be called the good manners of the passions. He could neither tell his wife a lie nor tell his mistress the truth—an indispensable training to enable a man to manage women. So he was obliged to appeal to all the powers of passion for two long hours, to wring from Béatrix the forgiveness he begged, denied him by an angel who raised her eyes to heaven not to see the culprit, and who uttered the reasons peculiar to Marquises in a voice choked with well-feigned tears, that she furtively wiped away with the lace edge of her handkerchief.

"You can talk to me of your wife the very day after I have yielded!—Why not say at once that she is a pearl of virtue? I know, she admires your beauty! That is what I call depravity! I—I love your soul! For I assure you, my dear boy, you are hideous compared with some shepherds of the Roman Campagna——," etc., etc.

This tone may seem strange, but it was a part of a system deliberately planned by Béatrix. In her third incarnation—for a woman completely changes with each fresh passion—she is far advanced in fraud—that is the only word that can describe the result of the experience gained in such adventures. The Marquise de Rochefide had sat in judgment on herself in front of her mirror. Clever women have no delusions about themselves; they count their wrinkles; they watch the beginnings of crows'-feet; they note the appearance of every speck in their skin; they know themselves by heart, and show it too plainly by the immense pains they take to preserve their beauty. And

so, to contend against a beautiful young wife, to triumph over her six days a week, Béatrix sought to win by the weapons of the courtesan. Without confessing to herself the baseness of her conduct, and carried away to use such means by a Turk-like passion for the handsome young man, she resolved to make him believe that he was clumsy, ugly, ill made, and to behave as if she hated him.

There is no more successful method with men of a domineering nature. To them the conquest of such disdain is the triumph of the first day renewed on every morrow. It is more; it is flattery hidden under the mask of aversion, and owing to it the charm and truth which underlie all the metamorphoses invented by the great nameless poets. Does not a man then say to himself, "I am irresistible!" or "I must love her well, since I conquer her repugnance!" If you deny this principle, which flirts and courtesans of every social grade discovered long ago, you must discredit the pursuers of science, the inquirers into secrets, who have long been repulsed in their duel with hidden causes.

Béatrix seconded her use of contempt as a moral incitement by a constant comparison between her comfortable poetic home and the Hôtel du Guénic. Every deserted wife neglects her home out of deep discouragement. Foreseeing this, Madame de Rochefide began covert innuendoes as to the luxury of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, which she stigmatized as absurd. The reconciliation scene, when Béatrix made Calyste swear to hate the wife who, as she said, was playing the farce of spilt milk, took place in a perfect bower, where she put herself into attitudes in the midst of beautiful flowers and jardinières of lavish costliness. She carried the art of trifles, of fashionable toys, to an extreme. Béatrix, sunk into contempt since Conti's desertion, was bent on gaining such fame as may be had by sheer perversity. The woes of a young wife, a Grandlieu, rich and lovely, were to build her a pedestal.

When a woman reappears in society after nursing her first child, she comes out again improved in charm and beauty.

If this phase of maternity can rejuvenate even women no longer in their first youth, it gives young wives a splendid freshness, a cheerful activity, a *brio* of life—if we may apply to the body a word which the Italians have invented for the mind. But while trying to resume the pleasant habits of the honeymoon, Sabine did not find the same Calyste. The unhappy girl watched him instead of abandoning herself to happiness. She expected the fatal perfume, and she smelt it; and she no longer confided in Ursule, nor in her mother, who had so charitably deceived her. She wanted certainty, and she had not long to wait for it. Certainty is never coy; it is like the sun, we soon need to pull down the blinds before it. In love it is a repetition of the fable of the Woodman calling on Death. We wish that certainty would blind us.

One morning, a fortnight after the first catastrophe, Sabine received this dreadful letter:—

To Madame la Baronne du Guénic.

"Guérande.

"My dear Daughter,—My sister Zéphirine and I are lost in conjectures as to the dressing-table mentioned in your letter; I am writing about it to Calyste, and beg your forgiveness for my ignorance. You cannot doubt our affection. We are saving treasure for you. Thanks to Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoël's advice as to the management of your land, you will in a few years find yourself possessed of a considerable capital without having to diminish your expenditure.

"Your letter, dearest daughter—whom I love as much as if I had borne you and fed you at my own breast—surprised me by its brevity, and especially by your making no mention of my dear little Calyste; you had nothing to tell me about the elder Calyste; he, I know, is happy," etc.

Sabine wrote across this letter, *"Brittany is too noble to lie with one accord!"* and laid it on Calyste's writing-table. He found it and read it. After recognizing Sabine's writing in the line across it, he threw it into the fire, determined never

to have seen it. Sabine spent a whole week in misery, of which the secret may be understood by those celestial or hermit souls that have never been touched by the wing of the fallen angel. Calyste's silence terrified Sabine.

"I, who ought to be all sweetness, all joy to him—I have vexed him, hurt him! My virtue is become hateful; I have perhaps humiliated my idol," said she to herself.

These thoughts ploughed furrows in her soul. She thought of asking forgiveness for this fault, but certainty brought her fresh proofs.

Béatrix, insolently bold, wrote to Calyste one day at his own house. The letter was put into Madame du Guénic's hands; she gave it to her husband unopened, but she said, with death in her soul, and in a broken voice:

"My dear, this note is from the Jockey Club; I know the scent and the paper."

Calyste blushed and put the letter in his pocket.

"Why do you not read it?"

"I know what they want."

The young wife sat down. She did not get an attack of fever, she did not cry, but she felt one of those surges of rage which in such feeble creatures bring forth monsters of crime, which arm them with arsenic for themselves or for their rivals. Little Calyste was presently brought to her, and she took him on her lap; the child, but just weaned, turned to find the breast under her dress.

"He remembers!" said she in a whisper.

Calyste went to his room to read the letter. When he was gone the poor young creature burst into tears, such tears as women shed when they are alone. Pain, like pleasure, has its initiatory stage; the first anguish, like that of which Sabine had so nearly died, can never recur, any more than a first experience of any kind. It is the first wedge of the torture of the heart; the others are expected, the wringing of the nerves is a known thing, the capital of strength has accumulated a deposit for firm resistance. And Sabine, sure now of the worst, sat by the fire for three hours with her boy on her knee,

and was quite startled when Gasselin, now their house-servant, came to announce that dinner was on the table.

"Let Monsieur know."

"Monsieur is not dining at home, Madame la Baronne."

Who can tell all the misery for a young woman of three-and-twenty, the torture of finding herself alone in the midst of a vast dining-room, in an ancient house, served by silent men, and in such circumstances?

"Order the carriage," she said suddenly; "I am going to the Opera."

She dressed splendidly; she meant to show herself alone, and smiling like a happy woman. In the midst of her remorse for the endorsement on that letter she was determined to triumph, to bring Calyste back to her by the greatest gentleness, by wifely virtues, by the meekness of a Paschal lamb. She would lie to all Paris. She loved him, she loved him as courtesans love, or angels, with pride and with humility.

But the Opera was *Othello.* When Rubini sang *Il mio cor si divide,* she fled. Music is often more powerful than the poet and the actor, the two most formidable natures combined. Savinien de Portenduère accompanied Sabine to the portico and put her into her carriage, unable to account for her precipitate escape.

Madame du Guénic now entered on a period of sufferings such as only the highest classes can know. You who are poor, envious, wretched, when you see on ladies' arms those snakes with diamond heads, those necklaces and pins, tell yourselves that those vipers sting, that those necklaces have poisoned teeth, that those light bonds cut into the tender flesh to the very quick. All this luxury must be paid for. In Sabine's position women can curse the pleasures of wealth; they cease to see the gilding of their rooms, the silk of sofas is as tow, exotic flowers as nettles, perfumes stink, miracles of cookery scrape the throat like barley-bread, and life has the bitterness of the Dead Sea.

Two or three instances will so plainly show the reaction of

a room or of a woman on happiness, that every one who has experienced it will be reminded of their home-life.

Sabine, warned of the dreadful truth, studied her husband when he was going out, to guess at the day's prospects. With what a surge of suppressed fury does a woman fling herself on to the red-hot pikes of such torture!—What joy for Sabine when he did not go to the Rue de Courcelles! When he came in she would look at his brow, his hair, his eyes, his expression and attitude, with a horrible interest in trifles, and the studious observation of the most recondite details of his dress, by which a woman loses her self-respect and dignity. These sinister investigations, buried in her heart, turned sour there and corroded the slender roots, whence grow the blue flowers of holy confidence, the golden stars of saintly love, all the blossoms of memory.

One day Calyste looked round at everything with ill-humor, but he stayed at home! Sabine was coaxing and humble, cheerful and amusing.

"You are cross with me, Calyste; am I not a good wife?—What is there here that you do not like?"

"All the rooms are so cold and bare," said he. "You do not understand this kind of thing."

"What is wanting?"

"Flowers——"

"Very good," said Sabine to herself; "Madame de Rochefide is fond of flowers, it would seem."

Two days later the rooms at the Hôtel du Guénic were completely altered. No house in Paris could pride itself on finer flowers than those that decorated it.

Some time after this Calyste, one evening after dinner, complained of the cold. He shivered in his chair, looking about him to see whence the draught came, and evidently seeking something close about him. It was some time before Sabine could guess the meaning of this new whim, for the house was fitted with a hot-air furnace to warm the staircase, anterooms, and passages. Finally, after three days' meditation, it struck her that her rival had a screen, no doubt, so as to

produce the subdued light that was favorable to the deterioration of her face; so Sabine purchased a screen made of glass, and of Jewish magnificence.

"Which way will the wind blow now?" she wondered.

This was not the end of the mistress' indirect criticism. Calyste ate so little at home as to drive Sabine crazy; he sent away his plate after nibbling two or three mouthfuls.

"Is it not nice?" asked Sabine, in despair, seeing all the pains wasted which she devoted to her conferences with the cook.

"I did not say so, my darling," replied Calyste, without annoyance. "I am not hungry, that is all."

A wife given up to a legitimate passion and to such a contest as this, feels a sort of fury in her desire to triumph over her rival, and often outruns the mark even in the most secret regions of married life. This cruel struggle, fierce and ceaseless, over the visible and outward facts of home-life, was carried on with equal frenzy over the feelings of the heart. Sabine studied her attitudes and dress, and watched herself in the smallest trivialities of love.

This matter of the cookery went on for nearly a month. Sabine, with the help of Mariotte and Gasselin, invented stage tricks to discover what dishes Madame de Rochefide served up for Calyste. Gasselin took the place of the coachman, who fell ill to order, and was thus enabled to make friends with Béatrix's cook; so at last Sabine could give Calyste the same fare, only better; but again she saw him give himself airs over it.

"What is wanting?" said she.

"Nothing," he answered, looking round the table for something that was not there.

"Ah!" cried Sabine to herself, as she woke next morning, "Calyste is pining for powdered cockroaches* and all the English condiments which are sold by the druggist in cruets; Madame de Rochefide has accustomed him to all sorts of spices."

*Balzac has *hannetons*, cockchafers. It was an old joke that Soy was made of cockroaches.—*Translator.*

She bought an English cruet-stand and its scorching contents; but she could not pursue her discoveries down to every dainty devised by her rival.

This phase lasted for several months; nor need we wonder when we remember all the attractions of such a contest. It is life; with all its wounds and pangs it is preferable to the blank gloom of disgust, to the poison of contempt, to the blankness of abdication, to the death of the heart that we call indifference. Still, all Sabine's courage oozed out one evening when she appeared dressed, as women only dress by a sort of inspiration, in the hope of winning the victory over another, and when Calyste said with a laugh:

"Do what you will, Sabine, you will never be anything but a lovely Andalusian!"

"Alas!" said she, sinking onto her sofa, "I can never be fair. But if this goes on, I know that I shall soon be five-and-thirty."

She refused to go to the Italian opera; she meant to stay in her room all the evening. When she was alone she tore the flowers from her hair and stamped upon them, she undressed, trampled her gown, her sash, all her finery under foot, exactly like a goat caught in a loop of its tether, which never ceases struggling till death. Then she went to bed. The maid presently came in. Imagine her surprise!

"It is nothing," said Sabine. "It is Monsieur."

Unhappy wives know this superb vanity, these falsehoods, where, of two kinds of shame both in arms, the more womanly wins the day.

Sabine was growing thin under these terrible agitations, grief ate into her soul; but she never forgot the part she had forced on herself. A sort of fever kept her up, her life sent back to her throat the bitter words suggested to her by grief; she sheathed the lightnings of her fine black eyes, and made them soft, even humble.

Her fading health was soon perceptible. The Duchess, an admirable mother, though her piety had become more and

more Portuguese, thought there was some mortal disease in the really sickly condition which Sabine evidently encouraged. She knew of the acknowledged intimacy of Calyste and Béatrix. She took care to have her daughter with her to try to heal her wounded feelings, and, above all, to save her from her daily martyrdom; but Sabine for a long time remained persistently silent as to her woes, fearing some intervention between herself and Calyste. She declared she was happy! Having exhausted sorrow, she fell back on her pride, on all her virtues.

At the end of the month, however, of being petted by her sister Clotilde and her mother, she confessed her griefs, told them all her sufferings, and cursed life, saying that she looked forward to death with delirious joy. She desired Clotilde, who meant never to marry, to be a mother to little Calyste, the loveliest child any royal race need wish for as its heir-presumptive.

One evening, sitting with her youngest sister Athénaïs—who was to be married to the Vicomte de Grandlieu after Lent—with Clotilde, and the Duchess, Sabine uttered the last cry of her anguish of heart, wrung from her by the extremity of her last humiliation.

"Athénaïs," said she, when at about eleven o'clock the young Vicomte Juste de Grandlieu took his leave, "you are going to be married, profit by my example! Keep your best qualities to yourself, as if they were a crime, resist the temptation to display them in order to please Juste. Be calm, dignified, cold; measure out the happiness you give in proportion to what you receive. It is mean, but it is necessary.—You see, I am ruined by my merits. All I feel within me that is the best of me, that is fine, holy, noble,—all my virtues have been rocks on which my happiness is shipwrecked. I have ceased to be attractive because I am not six-and-thirty!—In some men's eyes youth is a defect! There is no guesswork in a guileless face.

"I laugh honestly, and that is quite wrong when, to be fascinating, you ought to be able to elaborate the melancholy,

suppressed smile of the fallen angels who are obliged to hide their long yellow teeth. A fresh complexion is so monotonous; far preferable is a doll's waxen surface, compounded of rouge, spermaceti, and cold-cream. I am straightforward, and double dealing is more pleasing! I am frankly in love like an honest woman, and I ought to be trained to tricks and manœuvres like a country actress. I am intoxicated with the delight of having one of the most charming men in France for my husband, and I tell him sincerely how fine a gentleman he is, how gracefully he moves, how handsome I think him; to win him I ought to look away with affected aversion, to hate love-making, to tell him that his air of distinction is simply an unhealthy pallor and the figure of a consumptive patient, to cry up the shoulders of the Farnese Hercules, to make him angry, keep him at a distance as though a struggle were needed to hide from him at the moment of happiness some imperfection which might destroy love. I am so unlucky as to be able to admire a fine thing without striving to give myself importance by bitter and envious criticism of everything glorious in poetry or beauty. I do not want to be told in verse and in prose by Canalis and Nathan that I have a superior intellect! I am a mere simple girl; I see no one but Calyste!

"If I had only run all over the world as she has; if, like her, I had said, 'I love you,' in every European tongue, I should be made much of, and pitied, and adored, and could serve him up a Macedonian banquet of cosmopolitan loves! A man does not thank you for your tenderness till you have set it off by contrast with malignity. So I, a well-born wife, must learn all impurity, the interested charms of a prostitute! . . . And Calyste, the dupe of this grimacing! . . . Oh, mother! oh, my dear Clotilde! I am stricken to death. My pride is a deceptive ægis; I am defenceless against sorrow: I still love my husband like a fool, and to bring him back to me I need to borrow the keen wit of indifference."

"Silly child," whispered Clotilde, "pretend that you are bent on vengeance."

"I mean to die blameless, without even the appearance of wrong-doing," replied Sabine. "Our vengeance should be worthy of our love."

"My child," said the Duchess, "a mother should look on life with colder eyes than yours. Love is not the end but the means of family life. Do not imitate that poor little Baronne de Macumer. Excessive passion is barren and fatal. And God sends us our afflictions for reasons of His own. . . .

"Now that Athénaïs' marriage is a settled thing, I shall have time to attend to you. I have already discussed the delicate position in which you are placed with your father and the Duc de Chaulieu and d'Ajuda. We shall find means to bring Calyste back to you."

"With the Marquise de Rochefide there is no cause for despair," said Clotilde, smiling at her sister. "She does not keep her adorers long."

"D'Ajuda, my darling, was Monsieur de Rochefide's brother-in-law. If our good Confessor approves of the little manœuvres we must achieve to ensure the success of the plan I have submitted to your father, I will guarantee Calyste's return. My conscience loathes the use of such methods, and I will lay them before the Abbé Brossette. We need not wait, my child, till you are *in extremis* to come to your assistance. Keep up your hopes. Your grief this evening is so great that I have let out my secret; I cannot bear not to give you a little encouragement."

"Will it cause Calyste any grief?" asked Sabine, looking anxiously at the Duchess.

"Bless me, shall I be such another fool?" asked Athénaïs simply.

"Oh! child, you cannot know the straits into which Virtue can plunge us when she allows herself to be overruled by Love!" replied Sabine, so bewildered with grief that she fell into a vein of poetry.

The words were spoken with such intense bitterness that the Duchess, enlightened by her daughter's tone, accent, and look, understood that there was some unconfessed trouble.

"Well, well, go home now, poor little thing! Face to face with so much suffering, perhaps the Abbé will give me absolution for the venial sins we are forced to commit by the trickery of the world. Leave me, daughter," she said, going to her prie-Dieu. "I will beseech the Lord and the Blessed Virgin more especially for you. Above all, do not neglect your religious duties if you hope for success."

"Succeed as we may, mother, we can only save the family honor. Calyste has killed the sacred fervor of love in me by exhausting all my powers, even of suffering. What a honeymoon was that in which from the first day I was bitterly conscious of his retrospective adultery!"

At about one in the afternoon of the following day one of the priests of the Faubourg Saint-Germain—a man distinguished among the clergy of Paris, designate as a Bishop in 1848, but who had three times refused a see—the Abbé Brossette was crossing the courtyard of the Hôtel Grandlieu with the peculiar gait one must call the ecclesiastical gait, so expressive is it of prudence, mystery, calmness, gravity, and dignity itself. He was a small, bom man, about fifty years of age, with a face as white as an old woman's, chilled by priestly fasting, furrowed by all the sufferings he made his own. Black eyes, slight with faith, but softened by an expression that was mysterious rather than mystical, gave life to this apostolic countenance. He almost smiled as he went up the steps, so little did he believe in the enormity of the case for which his penitent had sent for him; but as the Duchess' hand was a dress for alms, she was well worth the time her guileless confessions made from the serious troubles of his parish. On hearing him announced, the Duchess rose and went forward a few steps to meet him, an honor she did to none but cardinals, bishops, priests of every grade, duchesses older than herself, and personages of the blood royal.

"My dear Abbé," said she, meeting in an armchair, and speaking in a low tone, "I remain the authority of your experience before I embark on a rather nasty intrigue, from

"Leave me, daughter," she said, going to her prie-dieu

which, however, I hope for a good result; I wish to learn from you whether I shall find the way of salvation very thorny in consequence."

"Madame la Duchesse," said the Abbé Brossette, "do not mix up spiritual and wordly matters; they are often irreconcilable.—In the first place, what is this business?"

"My daughter Sabine, you know, is dying of grief. Monsieur du Guénic neglects her for Madame de Rochefide."

"It is terrible—a very serious matter; but you know what the beloved Saint-François de Sales says of such a case. And remember Madame de Guyon, who bewailed the lack of mysticism in the proofs of conjugal love; she would have been only too glad to find a Madame de Rochefide for her husband."

"Sabine is only too meek, she is only too completely the Christian wife; but she has not the smallest taste for mysticism."

"Poor young thing!" said the curé slily. "And what is your plan for remedying the mischief?"

"I have been so sinful, my dear Director, as to think that I might let loose at her a smart little gentleman, wilful, and stocked with evil characteristics, who will certainly get my son-in-law out of the way."

"Daughter," said he, stroking his chin, "we are not in the tribunal of the repentant; I need not speak as your judge. —From a wordly point of view, I confess it would be final—"

"Such a proceeding strikes me as truly odious!" she put in.

"And why? It is, no doubt, far more the part of a Christian to snatch a woman from her evil ways than to push her forward in them; still, when she has already gone so far as Madame de Rochefide, it is not the hand of man, but the hand of God, that can rescue the sinner. She needs a special sign from Heaven."

"Thank you, Father, for your indulgence," said the Duchess. "But we must remember that my son-in-law is brave, and a Breton; he was heroic at the time of that poor Madame's attempted rising. Now if the young scapegrace who should

undertake to charm Madame de Rochefide were to fall out with Calyste, and a duel should ensue——"

"There, Madame la Duchesse, you show your wisdom; this proves that in such devious courses we always find some stumbling-block."

"But I hit upon a means, my dear Abbé, of doing good, of rescuing Madame de Rochefide from the fatal path she is following, of bringing Calyste back to his wife, and of saving a poor wandering soul perhaps from hell——"

"But, then, why consult me?" said the curé, smiling.

"Well," said the Duchess, "I should have to do some ugly things——"

"You do not mean to rob any one?"

"On the contrary, I shall probably spend a good deal of money."

"You will not slander anybody, nor——"

"Oh!"

"Nor do any injury to your neighbor?"

"Well, well, I cannot answer for that."

"Let us hear this new plan," said the curé, really curious.

"If, instead of driving one nail out by another, thought I, as I knelt on my prie-Dieu, after beseeching the Blessed Virgin to guide me, I were to get Monsieur de Rochefide to take back his wife and pack off Calyste—then, instead of abetting evil to do good, I should be doing a good action through another by means of a no less good deed of my own——" The priest looked at the lady, and seemed thoughtful.

"The idea has evidently come to you from so far that——"

"Yes," said the simple and humble-minded woman, "and I have thanked the Virgin.—And I vowed that besides paying for a *neuvaine,* I would give twelve hundred francs to some poor family if I should succeed. But when I spoke of the matter to Monsieur de Grandlieu, he burst out laughing, and said— 'I really believe that at your time of life you women have a special devil all to yourselves.' "

"Monsieur le Duc said, in a husband's fashion, just what I was about to observe when you interrupted me," replied the Abbé, who could not help smiling.

"Oh, Father, if you approve of the plan, will you approve of the method of execution? The point will be to do with a certain Madame Schontz—a Béatrix of the Saint-Georges quarter—what I had intended to do with Béatrix; the Marquis will then return to his wife."

"I am sure you will do no wrong," said the Abbé dexterously, not choosing to know more, as he thought the result necessary. "And you can consult me if your conscience makes itself heard," he added. "Supposing that instead of affording the lady in the Rue Saint-Georges some fresh occasion of misconduct, you were to find her a husband?——"

"Ah, my dear Director, you have set right the only bad feature of my scheme. You are worthy to be an archbishop, and I hope to live to address you as your Eminence."

"In all this, I see but one hitch," the priest went on.

"And what is that?"

"Madame de Rochefide might keep your son-in-law even if she returned to her husband?"

"That is my affair," said the Duchess. "We, who so rarely intrigue, when we do——"

"Do it badly, very badly," said the Abbé. "Practice is needed for everything. Try to annex one of the rascally race who live on intrigue, and employ him without betraying yourself."

"Oh! Monsieur le Curé, but if we have recourse to hell, will heaven be on our side?"

"You are not in the confessional," replied the Abbé; "save your child."

The good Duchess, delighted with the keeper of her conscience, escorted him as far as the drawing-room door.

A storm, it will be seen, was gathering over Monsieur de Rochefide, who, at this time, was enjoying the greatest share of happiness that a Parisian need desire, finding himself quite

as much the master in Madame Schontz's house as in his wife's; as the Duke had very shrewdly remarked to his wife, it would seem impossible to upset so delightful and perfect a plan of life. This theory of the matter necessitates a few details as to the life led by Monsieur de Rochefide since his wife had placed him in the position of a deserted husband. We shall thus understand the enormous difference in the view taken by law and by custom of the two sexes in the same circumstances. Everything that works woe to a deserted wife becomes happiness to the deserted husband. This striking antithesis may perhaps induce more than one young wife to remain in her home and fight it out, like Sabine du Guénic, by practising the most cruel or the most inoffensive virtues, whichever she may prefer.

A few days after Béatrix's flight, Arthur de Rochefide—an only child after the death of his sister, the first wife of the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto, who left him no children—found himself master of the family mansion of the Rochefides, Rue d'Anjou-Saint-Honoré, and of two hundred thousand francs a year, left to him by his father. This fine fortune, added to that which he had when he married, raised his income, including his wife's portion, to a thousand francs a day. To a gentleman of such a character as Mademoiselle des Touches had sketched to Calyste, such a fortune was happiness. While his wife was occupied with lovemaking and motherhood, Rochefide was enjoying his vast possessions, but he did not waste the money any more than he would waste his intelligence. His burly, good-natured conceit, amply satisfied with the reputation for being a fine man, to which he owed some success, entitling him, as he believed, to condemn women as a class, gave itself full play in the sphere of intellect. He was gifted with the sort of wit which may be termed refracting, by the way he repeated other person's jests and witticisms from plays or the newspapers; he appropriated them as his own; he affected to ridicule them, caricaturing them in repetition, and using them as a formula of criticism; then his military high spirits—for he had served in the

King's Guard—lent spice to his conversation, so that dull women called him witty, and the rest dared not contradict them.

Arthur carried this system out in everything; he owed to nature the useful trick of being an imitator without being an ape; he could imitate quite seriously. And so, though he had no taste, he was always the first to take up and to drop a fashion. He was accused of giving too much time to his toilet, and of wearing stays; but he was a typical example of those men who, by accepting the notions and the follies of others, never offend any one, who, always being up to date, never grow any older. They are the heroes of the second-rate.

This husband was pitied; Béatrix was held inexcusable for having run away from the best fellow in the world; ridicule fell only on the wife. This worthy, loyal, and very silly gentleman, a member of every club, a subscriber to every absurdity to which blundering patriotism and party-spirit gave rise, with a facile good-nature which brought him to the front on every occasion, was, of course, bent on glorifying himself by some fashionable hobby. His chief pride was to be the sultan of a four-footed seraglio, managed by an old English groom, and this kennel cost him from four to five thousand francs a month. His favorite fad was running horses; he patronized breeders, and paid the expenses of a paper in the racing interest; but he knew little about horses, and from the bridle to the shoes trusted to his groom. This is enough to show that this "grass-husband" had nothing of his own—neither wit, nor taste, nor position, nor even absurdities; and his fortune had come to him from his forefathers.

After having tasted all the annoyances of married life, he was so happy to find himself a bachelor again, that he would say among friends, "I was born to good luck!" He rejoiced especially in being able to live free of the expenses to which married folks are compelled; and his house, in which nothing had been altered since his father's death, was in the state of a man's home when he is traveling; he rarely went there, never fed there, and scarcely ever slept there.

This was the history of this neglect. After many love affairs, tired of women of fashion, who are indeed weariful enough, and who set too many dry thorn-hedges round the happiness they have to give, he had practically married Madame Schontz, a woman notorious in the world of Fanny Beaupré and Suzanne du Val-Noble, of Mariettes, Florentines, Jenny Cadines, and the like. This world—of which one of our draughtsmen wittily remarked, as he pointed to the whirl of an Opera ball, "When you think that all that mob is well housed, and dressed, and fed, you can form a good idea of what men are!"—this dangerous world has already been seen in this History of Manners in the typical figures of Florine and the famous Malaga (of *A Daughter of Eve* and *The Imaginary Mistress*); but to paint it faithfully, the historian would have to represent such persons in some numerical proportion to the variety of their strange individual lives, ending in poverty of the most hideous kind, in early death, in ease, in happy marriage, or sometimes in great wealth.

Madame Schontz, at first known as la Petite Aurélie, to distinguish her from a rival far less clever than herself, belonged to the higher class of these women on whose social uses no doubt can be thrown either by the Préfet of the Seine or by those who take an interest in the prosperity of the city of Paris. Certainly the "rats" accused of devouring fortunes, which are often imaginary, in some respects are more like a beaver. Without the Aspasias of the Notre-Dame de Lorette quarter, fewer houses would be built in Paris. Pioneers of fresh stucco, in tow of speculation, pitch their outlying tents along the hillsides of Montmartre, beyond those deserts of masonry which are to be seen in the streets round the Place de l'Europe—Amsterdam, Milan, Stockholm, London, and Moscow—architectural steppes betraying their emptiness by endless placards announcing *Apartments to let.*

The position of these ladies is commensurate with that of their lodgings in these innominate regions. If the house is near the line marked by the Rue de Provence, the woman has money in the Funds, her income is assured; but if she lives

out near the exterior boulevards, or on the height towards the horrible suburb of Batignolles, she is certainly poor.

Now when Monsieur de Rochefide first met Madame Schontz, she was lodging on the third floor of the only house then standing in the Rue de Berlin. The name of this unmarried wife, as you will have understood, was neither Aurélie nor Schontz. She concealed her father's name—that of an old soldier of the Empire, the perennial colonel who always adorns the origin of these existences, as the father or the seducer. Madame Schontz had enjoyed the benefits of a gratuitous education at Saint-Denis, where the young persons are admirably taught, but where the young persons are not provided on leaving with husbands or a living—an admirable foundation of the Emperor's, the only thing lacking being the Emperor himself! "I shall be there to provide for the daughters of my legionaries," said he, in answer to one of his Ministers who looked forward to the future. And in the same way Napoleon said, "I shall be there," to the members of the Institute, to whom it would be better to give no honorarium at all than to pay them eighty-three francs a month, less than the wages of many an office clerk.

Aurélie was very certainly the daughter of the valiant Colonel Schiltz, a leader of those daring Alsatian partisans who so nearly succeeded in saving the Emperor in the French campaign; he died at Metz, robbed, neglected, and ruined. In 1814 Napoleon sent little Joséphine Schiltz, then nine years old, to school at Saint-Denis. Without father or mother, home or money, the poor child was not driven out of the Institution on the second return of the Bourbons. She remained there as under-teacher till 1827; but then her patience failed, and her beauty led her astray. When she was of age, Joséphine Schiltz, the Empress' goddaughter, embarked on the adventurous life of the courtesan, tempted to this doubtful career by the fatal example of some of her school-fellows as destitute as she was, and who rejoiced in their decision. She substituted *on* for *il* in her father's name, and placed herself under the protection of Saint-Aurelia.

Clever, witty, and well informed, she made more mistakes than her more stupid companions, whose wrong-doing was always based on self-interest. After various connections with writers, some poor but unmannerly, some clever but in debt; after trying her fortune with some rich men as close-fisted as they were silly; after sacrificing ease to a true passion, and learning in every school where experience may be gained, one day, when, in the depths of poverty, she was dancing at Valentino's—the first stage to Musard's—dressed in a borrowed gown hat, and cape, she attracted Rochefide's attention; he had come to see the famous galop! Her cleverness bewitched the gentleman, who had exhausted every sensation; and when, two years after, being deserted by Béatrix, whose wit had often disconcerted him, he allied himself with a second-hand Béatrix "of the Thirteenth Arrondissement," no one thought of blaming him.

We may here give a sketch of the four seasons of such a happy home. It is desirable to show how the theory of "a marriage in the Thirteenth Arrondissement" includes all the whole connection. Whether a marquis of forty or a retired shopkeeper of sixty, a millionaire six times over or a man of narrow private means, a fine gentleman or a middle-class citizen, the tactics of passion, barring the differences inseparable from dissimilar social spheres, never vary. Heart and banking account maintain an exact and definite relation. And you will be able to form an idea of the obstacles the Duchess must meet with to her charitable scheme.

Few persons understand the power of words over ordinary folks in France, or the mischief done by the wits who invent them. For instance, no book-keeper could add up the figures of the sums of money which have lain unproductive and rusty at the bottom of generous hearts and full coffers in consequence of the mean phrase, *Tirer une carotte*—to fleece or bleed a victim. The words have become so common that they must be allowed to deface this page. Besides, if we venture into the "Thirteenth Arrondissement," we must needs adopt its picturesque language.

Monsieur de Rochefide, like all small minds, was constantly in fear of being bled. From the beginning of his attachment to Madame Schontz, Arthur was on his guard, and was at that time a dreadful screw, *très rat,* to use another slang word of the studio and the brothel. This word *rat* (which in French has many slang uses) when applied to a young girl means the person entertained, but applied to a man means the stingy entertainer. Madame Schontz had too much intelligence, and knew men too thoroughly, not to found high hopes on such a beginning. Monsieur de Rochefide allowed Madame Schontz five hundred francs a month, furnished, meagerly enough, a set of rooms at twelve hundred francs a year on the second floor of a house in the Rue Coquenard, and set himself to study Aurélie's character; and she, finding herself spied upon, gave him character to study.

Rochefide was delighted to have come across a woman of such a noble nature, but it did not astonish him; her mother was a Barnheim of Baden, quite a lady! And then Aurélie had been so well brought up! Speaking English, German, and Italian, she was versed in foreign literature; she could pit herself, without discomfiture, against pianists of the second class. And, note the point! she behaved as regarded her talents like a woman of breeding; she never talked about them. In a painter's studio she would take up a brush in fun, and sketch a head with so much *go* as to amaze the company. As a pastime, when she was pining as a school teacher, she had dabbled in some sciences, but her life as a kept mistress had sown salt over all this good seed, and, of course, she laid the flower of these precious growths, revived for him, at Arthur's feet. Thus did Aurélie at first make a display of disinterestedness to match the pleasures she could give, which enabled this light corvette to cast her grappling-irons firmly on board the statelier craft. Still, even at the end of the first year, she made a vulgar noise in the ante-room, managing to come in just when the Marquis was waiting for her, and tried to hide the disgracefully muddy hem of her gown in such a way as to make it more conspicuous. In short, she so cleverly contrived

to persuade her *Gros Papa* that her utmost ambition, after so many vicissitudes, was to enjoy a simple, middle-class existence, that by the end of ten months the second phase of their connection began.

Then Madame Schontz had a fine apartment in the Rue Saint-Georges. Arthur, who could no longer conceal from her the fact of his wealth, gave her handsome furniture, a service of plate, twelve hundred francs a month, and a little low carriage, with a single horse, by the week, and he granted her a little groom with a fairly good grace. She knew what this munificence was worth; she detected the motives of her Arthur's conduct, and saw in them the calculations of a close-fisted man. Tired of living at restaurants, where the food is generally execrable, where the simplest dinner of any refinement costs sixty francs, and two hundred for a party of four friends, Rochefide offered Madame Schontz forty francs a day for his dinner and a friend's, wine included. Aurélie had no mind to refuse. After getting all her moral bills of exchange accepted, drawn on Monsieur de Rochefide's habits at a year's date, she was favorably heard when she asked for five hundred francs a year more for dress, on the plea that her *Gros Papa,* whose friends all belonged to the Jockey Club, might not be ashamed of her.

"A pretty thing, indeed," said she, "if Rastignac, Maxime de Trailles, la Roche-Hugon, Ronquerolles, Laginski, Lenoncourt, and the rest should see you with a Madame Évrard! Put your trust in me, *Gros Père,* and you will be the gainer."

And Aurélie did, in fact, lay herself out for a fresh display of virtues in these new circumstances. She sketched a part for herself as the housewife, in which she won ample credit. She made both ends meet, said she, at the end of the month, and had no debts, on two thousand five hundred francs, such a thing as had never been seen in the Faubourg Saint-Germain of the Thirteenth Arrondissement—the upper ten of the demi-rep's world; and she gave dinners infinitely better than Nucingen's, with first-class wines at ten and twelve francs a bottle. So that Rochefide, amazed and delighted to be able

to ask his friends pretty often to his mistress' house as a matter of economy, would say to her, with his arm round her waist, "You are a perfect treasure!"

Before long he took a third share in an opera box for her, and at last went with her to first-night performances. He began to take counsel of his Aurélie, acknowledging the soundness of her advice; she allowed him to appropriate the wit she was always ready with; and her sallies, being new, won him the reputation for being an amusing man. At last he felt perfectly sure that she loved him truly, and for himself. Aurélie refused to make a Russian prince happy at the rate of five thousand francs a month.

"You are a happy man, my dear Marquis," cried old Prince Galathionne as they ended a rubber of whist at the club. "Yesterday, when you left us together, I tried to get her away from you; but 'Mon Prince,' said she, 'you are not handsomer than Rochefide though you are older; you would beat me, and he is like a father to me; show me then the quarter of a good reason for leaving him! I do not love Arthur with the crazy passion I had for the young rogues with patent leather boots, whose bills I used to pay; but I love him as a wife loves her husband when she is a decent woman.'—And she showed me to the door."

This speech, which had no appearance of exaggeration, had the effect of adding considerably to the state of neglect and shabbiness that disfigured the home of the Rochefides. Ere long Arthur had transplanted his existence and his pleasures to Madame Schontz's lodgings, and found it answer; for by the end of three years he had four hundred thousand francs to invest.

Then began the third phase. Madame Schontz became the kindest of mothers to Arthur's son; she fetched him from school and took him back herself; she loaded him with presents, sweetmeats, and pocket money; and the child, who adored her, called her his "little mamma." She advised her Arthur in the management of his money-matters, making him buy consols at the fall before the famous treaty of London,

which led to the overthrow of the Ministry on the 1st of March. Arthur made two hundred thousand francs, and Aurélie did not ask for a sou. Rochefide, being a gentleman, invested his six hundred thousand francs in Bank bills, half of them in the name of Mademoiselle Joséphine Schiltz.

A small house, rented in the Rue de la Bruyère, was placed in the hands of Grindot, that great architect on a small scale, with instructions to make it a delicious jewel case. Thenceforth Rochefide left everything in the hands of Madame Schontz, who received the dividends and paid the bills. Thus installed in his wife's place, she justified him by making her *Gros Papa* happier than ever. She understood his whims, and satisfied them, as Madame de Pompadour humored the fancies of Louis XV. She was, in fact, *maîtresse en titre*—absolute mistress.

She now allowed herself to patronize certain charming young men, artists and literary youths newly born to glory, who disowned the ancients and the moderns alike, and tried to achieve a great reputation by achieving nothing else. Madame Schontz's conduct, a master-work of tactics, shows her superior intelligence. In the first place, a party of ten or twelve young men amused Arthur, supplied him with witty sayings and shrewd opinions on every subject, and never cast any doubt on the fidelity of the mistress of the house; in the second place, they looked up to her as a highly intellectual woman. These living advertisements, these walking "puffs," reported that Madame Schontz was the most charming woman to be found on the borderland dividing the Thirteenth Arrondissement from the other twelve.

Her rivals, Suzanne Gaillard, who since 1838 had the advantage over her of being a legitimately married wife, Fanny Beaupré, Mariette, and Antonia, spread more than scandalous reports as to the beauty of these youths and the kindness with which Monsieur de Rochefide welcomed them. Madame Schontz, who could, she declared, give these ladies a start of three bad jokes and beat them, exclaimed one evening, at a

supper given by Florine after an opera, when she had set forth to them her good fortune and her success, "Do thou likewise!" a retort which had been remembered against her. At this stage of her career Madame Schontz got the racers sold, in deference to certain considerations, which she owed no doubt to the critical acumen of Claude Vignon, a frequent visitor.

"I cou'd quite understand," said she one day, after lashing the horses with her tongue, "that princes and rich men should take horse-breeding to heart, but for the good of the country, and not for the childish satisfaction of a gambler's vanity. If you had stud stables on your estates and could breed a thousand or twelve hundred horses, if each owner sent the best horse in his stable, and if every breeder in France and Navarre should compete every time, it would be a great and fine thing; but you buy a single horse, as the manager of a theatre engages his artists, you reduce an institution to the level of a game, you have a Bourse for legs as you have a Bourse for shares. It is degrading. Would you spend sixty thousand francs to see in the papers—'Monsieur de Rochefide's *Lélia* beat Monsieur le Duc de Rhétoré's *Fleur-de-Genêt* by a length——' Why, you had better give the money to a poet who will hand you down to immortality in verse or in prose, like the late lamented Montyon!"

By dint of such goading the Marquis was brought to see the hollowness of the turf; he saved his sixty thousand francs; and next year Madame Schontz could say to him: "I cost you nothing now, Arthur."

Many rich men envied the Marquis his Aurélie, and tried to win her from him; but, like the Russian Prince, they wasted their old age.

"Listen to me, my dear fellow," she had said a fortnight ago to Finot, now a very rich man, "I know that Rochefide would forgive me for a little flirtation if I really fell in love with another man, but no woman would give up a marquis who is such a thorough good fellow to take up with a *parvenu* like you. You would never keep me in such a position as

Arthur has placed me in. He has made me all but his wife, and half a lady, and you could never do as much for me even if you married me."

This was the last rivet that held the fortunate slave. The speech reached those absent ears for which it was intended.

Thus began the fourth phase, that of habit, the crowning victory of the plan of campaign which enables a woman of this stamp to say of the man, "I have him safe!" Rochefide, who had just bought a pretty house in the name of Mademoiselle Joséphine Schiltz, a mere trifle of eighty thousand francs, had, at the time when the Duchess was laying her plans, come to the point when he was vain of his mistress, calling her Ninon II., and boasting of her strict honesty, her excellent manners, her information, and wit. He had concentrated his good and bad qualities, his tastes and pleasures all in Madame Schontz, and had reached that stage of life when from weariness, indifference, or philosophy a man changes no more, but is faithful to his wife or his mistress.

The importance to which Madame Schontz had risen in five years may be understood when it is said that to be introduced to her a man had to be mentioned to her some time in advance. She had refused to make the acquaintance of certain tiresome rich men, and others of fly-blown reputations; she made no exceptions to this strict rule but in the case of certain great aristocratic names.

"They have a right to be stupid," she would say, "because they are swells."

Ostensibly she possessed the three hundred thousand francs that Rochefide had given her, and that a thorough good fellow, a stockbroker named Gobenheim—the only stockbroker she allowed in her house—managed for her; but she also managed for herself a little private fortune of two hundred thousand francs, formed of her savings on her house allowance for three years, by constantly buying and selling with the three hundred thousand francs, which were all she would ever confess to.

"The more you make, the less you seem to have," Gobenheim remarked one day.

"Water is so dear!" said she.

This unrevealed store was increased by the jewelry and diamonds which Aurélie would wear for a month and then sell, and by money given her for fancies she had forgotten. When she heard herself called rich, Madame Schontz would reply that, at present rates, three hundred thousand francs brought in twelve thousand francs, and that she had spent it all in the hard times of her life when Lousteau had been her lover.

Such method showed a plan; and Madame Schontz, you may be sure, had a plan. For the last two years she had been jealous of Madame du Bruel, and the desire to be married at the mairie and in church gnawed at her heart. Every social grade has its forbidden fruit, some little thing exaggerated by desire, till it seems as weighty as the globe. This ambition had, of course, its duplicate in the ambition of a second Arthur, whom watchfulness had entirely failed to discover. Bixiou would have it that the favorite was Léon de Lora; the painter believed that it was Bixiou, who was now past forty, and should be thinking of settling. Suspicion also fell on Victor de Vernisset, a young poet of the Canalis school, whose passion for Madame Schontz was a perfect madness; while the poet accused Stidmann, a sculptor, of being his favored rival. This artist, a very good-looking young man, worked for goldsmiths, for bronze dealers, and jewelers; he dreamed of being a Benvenuto Cellini. Claude Vignon, the young Comte de la Palférine, Gobenheim, Vermanton, a cynic philosopher, and other frequenters of this lively salon were suspected by turns, but all acquitted. No one was a match for Madame Schontz, not even Rochefide, who fancied she had a weakness for la Palférine, a clever youth; she was, in fact, virtuous in her own interests, and thought only of making a good match.

Only one man of equivocal repute was ever to be seen at Madame Schontz's, and that was Couture, who had more than once been howled at on the Bourse; but Couture was one of Madame Schontz's oldest friends, and she alone remained

faithful to him. The false alarm of 1840 swept away this speculator's last capital; he had trusted to the 1st of March Ministry; Aurélie, seeing that luck was against him, made Rochefide play for the other side. It was she who spoke of the last overthrow of this inventor of premiums and joint-stock companies as a *Découture* (unripping a rip).

Couture, delighted to find a knife and fork laid for him at Aurélie's, and getting from Finot—the cleverest, or perhaps the luckiest of parvenus—a few thousand-franc notes now and then, was the only man shrewd enough to offer his name to Madame Schontz, who studied him to ascertain whether this bold speculator would have strength enough to make a political career for himself, and gratitude enough not to desert his wife. A man of about forty-three years old, and worn for his age, Couture did not redeem the ill-repute of his name by his birth; he had little to say of his progenitors. Madame Schontz was lamenting the rarity of men of business capacity, when one day Couture himself introduced to her a provincial gentleman who happened to be provided with the two handles by which women hold this sort of pitcher when they mean not to drop it.

A sketch of this personage will be a portrait of a certain type of young man of the day. A digression will, in this case, be history.

In 1838, Fabien du Ronceret, the son of a President of the Chamber at the King's Court of Caen, having lost his father about a year before, came from Alençon, throwing up his appointment as magistrate, in which, as he said, his father had made him waste his time, and settled in Paris. His intention now was to get on in the world by cutting a dash, a Norman scheme somewhat difficult of accomplishment, since he had scarcely eight thousand francs a year, his mother still being alive, and enjoying the life-interest of some fine house property in the heart of Alençon. This youth had already, in the course of various visits to Paris, tried his foot on the tight rope; he had discerned the weak point of the social stucco restoration of 1830, and meant to work on it for his own profit,

following the lead of the sharpers of the middle class. To explain this, we must glance at one of the results of the new state of things.

Modern notions of equality, which in our day have assumed such extravagant proportions, have inevitably developed in private life—in a parallel line with political life—pride, conceit, and vanity, the three grand divisions of the social *I*. Fools wish to pass for clever men, clever men want to be men of talent, men of talent expect to be treated as geniuses: as to the geniuses, they are more reasonable; they consent to be regarded as no more than demi-gods. This tendency of the spirit of the time, which in the Chamber of Deputies makes the manufacturer jealous of the statesman, and the administrator jealous of the poet, prompts fools to run down clever men, clever men to run down men of talent, men of talent to run down those who are a few inches higher than themselves, and the demi-gods to threaten institutions, the throne itself, in short, everything and everybody that does not worship them unconditionally.

As soon as a nation is so impolitic as to overthrow recognized social superiority, it opens the sluice-gates, through which rushes forthwith a torrent of second-rate ambitions, the least of which would fain be first. According to the democrats, its aristocracy was a disease, but a definite and circumscribed disease; it has exchanged this for ten armed and contending aristocracies, the worst possible state of things. To proclaim the equality of all is to declare the rights of the envious. We are enjoying now the Saturnalia of the Revolution transferred to the apparently peaceful sphere of intelligence, industry, and politics; it seems as though the reputations earned by hard work, good service, and talent were a privilege granted at the expense of the masses. The agrarian law will ere long be extended to the field of glory.

Thus, at no time have men demanded public recognition on more puerile grounds. They must be remarked at any cost for an affectation of devotion to the cause of Poland, to the penitential system, to the future prospects of released convicts,

to that of small rogues under or over the age of twelve, to any kind of social quackery. These various manias give rise to spurious dignities—Presidents, Vice-presidents, and Secretaries of Societies, which, in Paris, outnumber the social questions to be solved. Society on a grand scale has been demolished to make way for a thousand small ones in the image of the dead one.

Do not all these parasitical organisms point to decomposition? Are they not the worms swarming in the carcase? All these social bodies are the daughters of one mother—Vanity. Not thus does Catholic charity act, or true benevolence; these study disease while healing its sores, and do not speechify in public on morbid symptoms for the mere pleasure of talking.

Fabien du Ronceret, without being a superior man, had divined, by the exercise of that acquisitive spirit peculiar to the Norman race, all the advantage he might take of this public distemper. Each age has its characteristic, which clever men trade on. Fabien's only aim was to get himself talked about.

"My dear fellow, a man must make his name known if he wants to get on," said he as he left, to du Bousquier, a friend of his father's, and the King of Alençon. "In six months I shall be better known than you."

This was how Fabien interpreted the spirit of his time; he did not rule it, he obeyed it.

He had first appeared in *bohemia,* a district of the moral topography of Paris (see *A Prince of Bohemia*), and was known as "The Heir," in consequence of a certain premeditated parade of extravagance. Du Ronceret had taken advantage of Couture's follies in behalf of pretty Madame Cadine—one of the newer actresses, who was considered extremely clever at the second-class theatres—for whom he had furnished a charming ground-floor apartment with a garden, in the Rue Blanche.

This was the way in which the men made acquaintance. The Norman, in search of ready-made luxury, bought the furniture from Couture, with all the decorative fixtures he

could not remove from the rooms, a garden room for smoking in, with a veranda built of rustic woodwork, hung with Indian matting, and decorated with pottery, to get to the smoking-room in rainy weather. When the Heir was complimented on his rooms, he called them his den. The provincial took care not to mention that Grindot the architect had lavished all his art there, as had Stidmann on the carvings, and Léon de Lora on the paintings; for his greatest fault was that form of conceit which goes so far as lying with a view to self-glorification.

The Heir put the finishing touch to this splendor by building a conservatory against a south wall, not because he loved flowers, but because he meant to attack public repute by means of horticulture. At this moment he had almost attained his end. As Vice-president of some gardening society, under the presidency of the Duc de Vissembourg, brother of the Prince de Chiavari, the younger son of the late Maréchal Vernon, he had been able to decorate the vice-presidential coat with the ribbon of the Legion of Honor after an exhibition of horticultural produce, which he opened by an address given out as his own, but purchased of Lousteau for five hundred francs. He was conspicuous by wearing a flower given to him by old Blondet of Alençon, Émile Blondet's father, which he said had bloomed in his conservatory.

But this triumph was nothing. Du Ronceret, who was anxious to pass as a man of superior intelligence, had schemed to ally himself with a set of famous men, to shine by a reflected light, a plan very difficult to carry out on the basis of an income of eight thousand francs. And, in fact, he had looked by turns, but in vain, to Bixiou, Stidmann, and Léon de Lora to introduce him to Madame Schontz, so as to become a member of that menagerie of lions of every degree. Then he dined Couture so often, that Couture proved categorically to Madame Schontz that she had to admit such an eccentric specimen, were it only to secure him as one of those graceful unpaid messengers whom house-mistresses are glad to employ on the errands for which servants are unsuited.

By the end of the third evening Madame Schontz knew Fabien through and through, and said to herself, "If Couture does not serve my turn, I am perfectly certain of this man. My future life runs on wheels."

So this simpleton, laughed at by every one, was the man of her choice; but with a deliberate purpose which made the preference an insult, and the choice was never suspected from its utter improbability. Madame Schontz turned Fabien's brain by stolen smiles, by little scenes on the threshold when she saw him out the last, if Monsieur de Rochefide spent the evening there. She constantly invited Fabien to be the third with Arthur in her box at the Italiens, or at first-night performances; excusing herself by saying that he had done her this or that service, and that she had no other way of returning it.

Men have a rivalry of conceit among themselves—in common indeed with women—in their desire to be loved for themselves. Hence of all flattering attachments, none is more highly valued than that of a Madame Schontz for the man she makes the object of her heart's affections in contrast with the other kind of love. Such a woman as Madame Schontz, who played at being a fine lady, and who was in truth a very superior woman, was, as she could not fail to be, a subject of pride to Fabien, who fell so desperately in love with her that he never appeared in her presence but in full dress, patent leather boots, lemon-colored gloves, an embroidered and frilled shirt, an endless variety of waistcoats, in short, every external symptom of the sincerest adoration.

A month before the conference between the Duchess and the Abbé, Madame Schontz had confided the secret of her birth and her real name to Fabien, who could not understand the object of this disclosure. A fortnight later Madame Schontz, puzzled by the Norman's lack of comprehension, exclaimed to herself:

"Good heavens, what an idiot I am! Why, he believes that I am in love with him!"

So then she took him out for a drive in the Bois, in her

carriage, for she had had a low phaeton with a pair of horses for a year past.

In the course of this public *tête-à-tête* she discussed the question of her ultimate fate, and explained that she wished to get married.

"I have seven hundred thousand francs," said she; "and I may confess to you that if I could meet with a man of great ambition, who could understand me thoroughly, I would change my condition; for, do you know, the dream of my life is to be a good citizen's wife, connected with a respectable family, and to make my husband and children all very happy."

The Norman was content to be a favorite with Madame Schontz; but to marry her seemed madness beyond discussion to a bachelor of eight-and-thirty, of whom the Revolution of July had made a Judge. Seeing his hesitation, Madame Schontz made the Heir a butt for the arrows of her wit, her irony, and her scorn, and turned to Couture. Within a week the speculator, tempted by a hint of her savings, offered her his hand, his heart, and his future prospects—all three of equal value.

Madame Schontz's manœuvres had reached this stage when Madame de Grandlieu began to inquire as to the manners and customs of this Béatrix of the Rue Saint-Georges.

Following the Abbé Brossette's advice, the Duchess begged the Marquis d'Ajuda to bring to her house that prince of political jugglers, the famous Comte de Trailles, the Archduke of bohemia, and the youngest of the young, though he was now fifty. Monsieur d'Ajuda arranged to dine with Maxime at the club in the Rue de Beaune, and proposed that they should go on together to play dummy whist with the Duc de Grandlieu, who, having had an attack of the gout before dinner, would be alone. Though the Duke's son-in-law, the Duchess' cousin, had every right to introduce him into a house where he had never yet set foot, Maxime de Trailles was under no misapprehension as to the invitation thus conveyed; he concluded that either the Duke or the Duchess wanted to

make use of him. A not unimportant feature of the time is the club life, where men gamble with others whom they would never receive in their own houses.

The Duke so far honored Maxime as to confess that he was ill; after fifteen games of whist he went to bed, leaving his wife with Maxime and d'Ajuda. The Duchess, supported by the Marquis, explained her plans to Monsieur de Trailles, and asked his assistance, while seeming only to ask his advice. Maxime listened to the end without saying anything decisive, and would not speak till the Duchess had asked him point-blank to help her.

"I quite understand the matter, madame," said he after giving her one of those looks—keen, astute, and comprehensive—by which these old hands can compromise their allies. "D'Ajuda will tell you that I, if any one in Paris, can manage this double business, without your appearing in it, without its being known even that I have been here this evening. But, first of all, we must settle the Preliminaries of Léoben. What do you propose to sacrifice for this end?"

"Everything that is required."

"Very good, Madame la Duchesse. Then as the reward of my services, you will do me the honor of receiving here and giving your countenance to Madame la Comtesse de Trailles?"

"Are you married?" exclaimed d'Ajuda.

"I am going to be married in a fortnight to the only daughter of a wealthy family, but to the last degree middle class! It is a sacrifice to opinion; I am adopting the strictest principles of my government. I am casting my old skin.

"So you will understand, Madame la Duchesse, how important for me it would be that you and your family should take up my wife. I am quite certain to be elected deputy when my father-in-law retires from his post, as he intends doing, and I have been promised a diplomatic appointment that befits my new fortune.—I cannot see why my wife should not be as well received as Madame de Portenduère in a society of young wives where such stars are to be seen as Mesdames de

la Bastie, Georges de Maufrigneuse, de l'Estorade, du Guénic, d'Ajuda, de Restaud, de Rastignac, and de Vandenesse. My wife is pretty, and I will undertake to wake her up.

"Does this meet your views, Madame la Duchesse?

"You are a religious woman; and if you say yes, your promise, which I know will be sacred, will help me immensely in my changed life. And it will be another good action!—Alas, I have long been the chief of a rascally crew; but I want to be quit of all that. After all, our arms are good: Azure, a chimera or, spouting fire, armed gules, scaled vert; a chief counter erminé; granted by Francis I., who thought it desirable to give a patent of nobility to Louis XI.'s groom of the chambers—and we have been counts since the time of Catherine de Medicis."

"I will receive and introduce your wife," said the Duchess solemnly, "and my family shall never turn their back on her, I give you my word."

"Oh, Madame la Duchesse," exclaimed Maxime, visibly touched, "if Monsieur le Duc will also condescend to treat me kindly, I promise you on my part to make your plan succeed with no great loss to yourself.—But," he went on, after a pause, "you must pledge yourself to obey my instructions. . . . This is the last intrigue of my bachelor life; it must be carried through with all the more care because it is a good action," he said, smiling.

"Obey?" said the Duchess. "But must I appear in all this?"

"Indeed, madame, I will not compromise you," cried Maxime, "and I respect you too implicitly to ask for security. You have only to follow my advice. Thus, for instance, du Guénic must be carried off by his wife like a sacred object, and kept away for two years; she must take him to see Switzerland, Italy, Germany, the more strange lands the better——"

"Ah, that answers a fear expressed by my director," exclaimed the Duchess guilelessly, as she remembered the Abbé Brossette's judicious observation. Maxime and d'Ajuda could

not help smiling at the idea of this coincidence of heaven and hell.

"To prevent Madame de Rochefide from ever seeing Calyste again," she added, "we will all travel, Juste and his wife, Calyste and Sabine, and I. I will leave Clotilde with her father——"

"Do not let us shout 'Victory' just yet, madame," said Maxime. "I foresee immense difficulties; I shall conquer them, no doubt. Your esteem and favor are a prize for which I will plunge through much dirt; but it will be——"

"Dirt!" said the Duchess, interrupting the modern *condottière* with a face equally expressive of disgust and surprise.

"Ay, and you will have to step in it, madame, since I act for you. Are you really so ignorant of the pitch of blindness to which Madame de Rochefide has brought your son-in-law? I know it, through Nathan and Canalis, between whom she was hesitating when Calyste threw himself into that lioness' maw. Béatrix has made the noble Breton believe that she never loved any one but him, that she is virtuous, that her attachment to Conti was of the head only, and that her heart and the rest had very little to do with it—a musical passion, in short. As to Rochefide, that was a matter of duty.

"So, you understand, she is virginal. And she proves it by forgetting her son; for a year past she has not made the smallest attempt to see him. The little Count is, in point of fact, nearly twelve years old, and he has found a mother in Madame Schontz; motherhood is the mania, as you know, of women of that stamp.

"Du Guénic would be cut in pieces, and let his wife be cut in pieces, for Béatrix. And do you suppose that it is easy to drag a man back from the depths of the abyss of credulity? Why, madame, Shakespeare's Iago would waste all his handkerchiefs in such a task. It is generally imagined that Othello, his younger brother Orosmane, and Saint-Preux, and René, and Werther, and other lovers who are famous, typify love! Their icy-hearted creators never knew what was meant

by an absorbing passion, Molière alone had a suspicion of it.—Love, Madame la Duchesse, is not an attachment to a noble woman, to a Clarissa; a great achievement that, on my word! —Love is to say to one's self: 'The woman I worship is a wretch; she is deceiving me, she will deceive me again, she is an old hand, she smells of the burning pit!'—and to fly to her, to find the blue of heaven, the flowers of Paradise. That is how Molière loved, and how we love, we scamps and rips; for I can cry at the great scene in *Arnolphe!* That is how your son-in-law loves Béatrix!

"I shall have some difficulty in getting Rochefide from Madame Schontz; however, Madame Schontz can, no doubt, be got to abet us; I will study her household. As to Calyste and Béatrix, it will need an axe to divide them, treachery of the best quality, infamy so base that your virtuous imagination could not go so low unless your director held your hand. —You have asked for the impossible, you shall have it. Still, in spite of my determination to employ the sword and fire, I cannot absolutely pledge myself to success. I know lovers who do not shrink under the most entire disenchantment. You are too virtuous to understand the power of women who have no virtue."

"Do not attempt these infamies till I shall have consulted the Abbé Brossette, to know how far I am involved in them," cried the Duchess, with an artlessness that revealed how selfish religion can be.

"You know nothing about it, my dear mother," said the Marquis d'Ajuda.

On the steps, while waiting for Ajuda's carriage to come up, the Marquis said to Maxime:

"You have frightened our good Duchess."

"But she has no idea of the difficulty of the thing she wants done!—Are we going to the Jockey Club? Rochefide must ask me to dine to-morrow at Schontz's rooms; in the course of to-night my plans will be laid, and I shall have chosen the pawns in my chessboard that are to move in the game I mean to play. In the days of her splendor Béatrix would have

nothing to say to me; I will settle accounts with her, and avenge your sister-in-law so cruelly, that perhaps she will think I have overdone it."

On the following day Rochefide told Madame Schontz that Maxime de Trailles was coming to dinner. This was to warn her to display the utmost luxury, and prepare the very best fare for this distinguished connoisseur, who was the terror of every woman of Madame Schontz's class; and she gave as much care to her toilet as to arranging her house in a fitting way to receive the great man.

In Paris there are almost as many royal heads as there are different arts or special sciences, faculties, or professions; the best of those who exercise each has a royal dignity proper to himself; he is revered and respected by his peers, who know the difficulties of his work, and admire unreservedly the man who can defy them. In the eyes of the corps de ballet and courtesans Maxime was an extremely powerful and capable man, for he had succeeded in being immensely loved. He was admired by everybody who knew how hard it is to live in Paris on decent terms with your creditors; and he had never had any rival in elegance, demeanor, and wit but the famous de Marsay, who had employed him on political missions. This is enough to account for his interview with the Duchess, his influence over Madame Schontz, and the authority of his tone in a conference he intended to hold on the Boulevard des Italiens with a young man, who was already famous though recently introduced to the bohemia of Paris.

As he rose next morning, Maxime de Trailles heard Finot announced, to whom he had sent the night before; he begged him to arrange a fortuitous meeting at breakfast at the Café Anglais between Couture, Lousteau, and himself, where they would chat in his hearing. Finot, who was to Maxime de Trailles as a lieutenant in the presence of a Marshal of France, could refuse him nothing; it was indeed too dangerous to provoke this lion. So when Maxime came in to breakfast, he found Finot and his two friends at a table; the con-

versation had already been directed towards the subject of Madame Schontz. Couture, cleverly steered by Finot and Lousteau, who, unknown to himself, was Finot's abettor, let out everything that the Comte de Trailles wanted to know about Madame Schontz.

By one o'clock, Maxime, chewing his toothpick, was talking to du Tillet on the steps of Tortoni's, where speculators form a little Bourse preliminary to real dealings on 'Change. He seemed to be absorbed in business, but he was waiting to see the young Comte de la Palférine, who must pass that way sooner or later. The Boulevard des Italiens is now what the Pont Neuf was in 1650; everybody who is anybody crosses it at least once a day.

In fact, within ten minutes, Maxime took his hand from du Tillet's arm, and nodding to the young Prince of bohemia, said with a smile, "Two words with you, Count!"

The rivals, one a setting star, the other a rising sun, took their seat on four chairs outside the Café de Paris. Maxime was careful to place himself at a sufficient distance from certain old fogies who, from sheer habit, plant themselves in a row against the wall after one in the afternoon, to dry out their rheumatic pains. He had ample reasons for distrusting these old men. (See *A Man of Business.*)

"Have you any debts?" asked Maxime of the young man.

"If I had not, should I be worthy to succeed you?" replied la Palférine.

"When I ask you such a question, it is not to cast any doubt on the matter," said de Trailles. "I only want to know if they amount to a respectable sum-total, running into five or six."

"Five or six what?" said la Palférine.

"Six figures! Do you owe 50,000, 100,000?—My debts ran up to 600,000 francs."

La Palférine took off his hat with an air of mocking respect.

"If I had credit enough to borrow a hundred thousand francs," replied he, "I would cut my creditors and go to live

at Venice in the midst of its masterpieces of painting, spending the evening at the theatre, the night with pretty women, and——"

"And at my age where would you be?"

"I should not last so long," replied the young Count.

Maxime returned his rival's civility by just raising his hat with an expression of comical gravity.

"That is another view of life," he replied, as a connoisseur answering a connoisseur. "Then you owe——?"

"Oh, a mere trifle, not worth confessing to an uncle, if I had one. He would disinherit me for such a contemptible sum; six thousand francs."

"Six thousand give one more trouble than a hundred thousand," said Maxime sententiously. "La Palférine, you have a bold wit, you have even more wit than boldness; you may go far and become a political personage. Look here—of all the men who have rushed into the career which I have run, and who have been pitted against me, you are the only one I ever liked."

La Palférine colored, so greatly was he flattered by this confession, made with gracious bluntness, by the greatest of Parisian adventurers. This instinct of vanity was a confession of inferiority which annoyed him; but Maxime understood the reaction easy to foresee in so clever a man, and did his best to correct it at once by placing himself at the young man's discretion.

"Will you do something for me now that I am retiring from the Olympian course by marrying, and marrying well?—I would do a great deal for you," he added.

"You make me very proud," said la Palférine; "this is to put the fable of the lion and the mouse into practice."

"In the first place, I will lend you twenty thousand francs," Maxime went on.

"Twenty thousand francs?—I knew that if I walked this Boulevard long enough——!" said la Palférine in a parenthesis.

"My dear boy, you must set yourself up in some sort of

style," said Maxime, smiling. "Do not trot about on your two feet; set up six. Do as I have done; I never get lower than a tilbury——"

"But then you must want me to do something quite beyond my powers."

"No. Only to make a woman fall in love with you within a fortnight."

"A woman of the town?"

"Why?"

"That would be out of the question; but if she is a lady, quite a lady, and very clever——"

"She is a Marquise of the first water."

"You want her letters?" said the young Count.

"Ah, you are a man after my own heart!" cried Maxime. "No. That is not what is wanted."

"I am really to love her?"

"Yes, really and truly."

"If I am to go beyond æsthetics, it is quite impossible," said la Palférine. "With regard to women, you see, I have a kind of honesty; we may trick them, but not——"

"Then I have not been mistaken," exclaimed Maxime. "Do you suppose I am the man to scheme for some little tu'pence meanness? . . . No, you must go, you must dazzle and conquer. . . . I give you twenty thousand, and ten days to win in.—Till this evening at Madame Schontz's."

"I am dining there."

"Good," said Maxime. "By and by, when you want me, you will find me, Monsieur le Comte," he added, with the air of a king pledging his word rather than promising.

"The poor woman has done you some terrible mischief then?" asked la Palférine.

"Do not try to sound the depth of my waters, my son; but let me tell you that, if you succeed, you will secure such powerful interest, that when you are tired of your Bohemian life you may, like me, retire on the strength of a rich marriage."

"Does a time come, then, when we are tired of amusing ourselves," said la Palférine, "of being nothing, of living as the birds live, of hunting in Paris like wild men, and laughing at all that turns up?"

"We tire of everything, even of hell!" said Maxime with a laugh.—"Till this evening."

The two scamps, the old one and the young one, rose. As Maxime got into his one-horse cab, he said to himself:

"Madame d'Espard cannot endure Béatrix; she will help me.—To the Hôtel Grandlieu," he cried to the coachman, seeing Rastignac pass. Find a great man without a weakness.

Maxime found the Duchess, Madame du Guénic, and Clotilde in tears.

"What has happened?" he asked the Duchess.

"Calyste did not come in—it is the first time, and my poor Sabine is in despair."

"Madame la Duchesse," said Maxime, drawing the pious lady into a window-bay, "in the name of God, who will judge us, do not breathe a word as to my devotion; pledge d'Ajuda to secrecy; never let Calyste know anything of our plots, or we shall fight a duel to the death. When I told you this would not cost you much, I meant that you would not have to spend any monstrous sum. I want about twenty thousand francs, but everything else is my business; you may have to find some good appointments—one Receiver-General's, perhaps."

The Duchess and Maxime left the room. When Madame de Grandlieu came back to her two daughters, she heard a fresh lament from Sabine, full of domestic details, even more heartbreaking than those which had put an end to the young wife's happiness.

"Be calm, my child," said the Duchess to her daughter; "Béatrix will pay dearly for all your tears and misery; she will endure ten humiliations for each one of yours."

Madame Schontz had sent word to Claude Vignon, who had frequently expressed a wish to make the acquaintance of

Maxime de Trailles; she invited Couture, Fabien, Bixiou, Léon de Lora, la Palférine, and Nathan, whom Rochefide begged to have for Maxime's benefit. Thus she had a party of nine, all of the first water, excepting du Ronceret; but the Heir's Norman vanity and brutality were a match for Claude Vignon's literary force, for Nathan's poetry, la Palférine's acumen, Couture's keen eye to the main chance, Bixiou's wit, Finot's foresight, Maxime's depth, and Léon de Lora's genius.

Madame Schontz, who aimed at appearing young and handsome, fortified herself in such a toilet as women of that class alone can achieve—a point-lace cape of spider-web fineness, a blue velvet dress, of which the elegant bodice was buttoned with opals, her hair in smooth bands, and shining like ebony. Madame Schontz owed her fame as a beauty to the brilliancy and color of a warm, creamy complexion like a Creole's, a face full of original details, with the clean-cut, firm features —of which the Comtesse de Merlin was the most famous example and the most perennially young—peculiar perhaps to southern faces. Unluckily, since her life had been so calm, so easy, little Madame Schontz had grown decidedly fat. Her neck and shoulders, bewitchingly round, were getting coarse. Still, in France a woman's face is thought all-important, and a fine head will secure a long life to an ungraceful shape.

"My dear child," said Maxime as he came in and kissed Aurélie on the forehead, "Rochefide wanted me to see your home, where I have not yet been; it is almost worthy of his income of four hundred thousand francs. Well, he had less by fifty thousand a year when he first knew you; in less than five years you have gained for him as much as any other woman—Antonia, Malaga, Cadine, or Florentine—would have devoured."

"I am not a baggage—I am an artist!" said Madame Schontz, with some dignity. "I hope to end by founding a family of respectable folks, as they say in the play."

"It is dreadful, we all getting married," said Maxime,

dropping into a chair by the fire. "Here am I within a few days of making a Comtesse Maxime."

"Oh! how I should like to see her!" cried Madame Schontz. —"But allow me," she went on, "to introduce Monsieur Claude Vignon—Monsieur Claude Vignon, Monsieur de Trailles."

"Ah, it was you who let Camille Maupin—mine hostess of literature—go into a convent?" cried Maxime. "After you, God!—No one ever did me so much honor. Mademoiselle des Touches made a Louis XIV. of you, monsieur."

"And this is how history is written!" said Claude Vignon. "Did you not know that her fortune was spent in releasing Monsieur du Guénic's estates? If she knew that Calyste had fallen into the arms of her ex-friend!——" Maxime kicked the critic's foot, looking at Monsieur de Rochefide, "on my word, I believe she would come out of her nunnery to snatch him from her."

"I declare, my dear Rochefide," said Maxime, finding that his warning had failed to check Claude Vignon, "in your place I would give my wife her fortune, that the world might not suppose that she had taken up Calyste for want of money."

"Maxime is right!" said Madame Schontz, looking at Arthur, who colored violently. "If I have saved you some thousand francs to invest, you could not spend them better. I should have secured the happiness of both husband and wife.—What a good-conduct stripe!"

"I never thought of it," replied the Marquis. "But it is true; one is a gentleman first, and a husband after."

"Let me advise you of the appropriate moment for your generosity," said Maxime.

"Arthur," said Aurélie, "Maxime is right. Our generous actions, you see, old boy, must be done as Couture's shares must be sold," and she looked in the glass to see who was coming in, "in the nick of time."

Couture was followed by Finot, and in a few minutes all the guests were assembled in the handsome blue-and-gold

drawing-room of the "Hôtel Schontz," as the men called their place of meeting since Rochefide had bought it for his Ninon II. On seeing la Palférine come in the last, Maxime went up to him, drew him into a recess, and gave him the twenty bank-notes.

"Above all, do not be stingy with them," said he, with the native grace of a spendthrift.

"No one knows so well as you how to double the value of what appears to be a gift," replied la Palférine.

"Then you agree?"

"Well, since I take the money!" replied the youth, with some pride and irony.

"Very well. Nathan, who is here, will take you within two days to call on the Marquise de Rochefide," said Maxime in his ear.

La Palférine jumped as he heard the name.

"Do not fail to declare yourself madly in love with her; and, to rouse no suspicions, drink, wine, liqueurs no end! I will tell Aurélie to put you next to Nathan. Only, my son, we must now meet every night on the Boulevard de la Madeleine, at one in the morning; you to report progress, and I to give you instructions."

"I will be there, master," said the young Count, with a bow.

"What makes you ask a fellow to dine with us who comes dressed like a waiter?" said Maxime to Madame Schontz in a whisper, and looking at du Ronceret.

"Have you never seen 'The Heir?' Du Ronceret, from Alençon."

"Monsieur," said Maxime to Fabien, "you must know my friend d'Esgrignon?"

"Victurnien dropped the acquaintance long since," replied Fabien, "but we were very intimate as boys."

The dinner was such as can only be given in Paris, and in the houses of these perfectly reckless women, for their refined luxury amazes the most fastidious. It was at a supper of this kind, given by a rich and handsome courtesan like Madame

Schontz, that Paganini declared that he had never eaten such food at the table of any sovereign, nor drunk such wine in any prince's house, nor heard such witty conversation, nor seen such attractive and tasteful magnificence.

Maxime and Madame Schontz were the first to return to the drawing-room, at about ten o'clock, leaving the other guests, who had ceased to veil their anecdotes, and who boasted of their powers, with sticky lips glued to liqueur glasses that they could not empty.

"Well, pretty one," said Maxime, "you are quite right. Yes, I came to get something out of you. It is a serious matter; you must give up Arthur. But I will see that he gives you two hundred thousand francs."

"And why am I to give him up, poor old boy?"

"To marry that noodle, who came from Alençon on purpose. He has already been a Judge; I will get him made President of the Court in the place of old Blondet, who is nearly eighty-two, and if you know how to catch the wind, your husband will be elected deputy. You will be people of importance, and crush Madame la Comtesse du Bruel——"

"Never!" cried Madame Schontz; "she is a Countess."

"Is he of the stuff they make counts of?"

"Well, he has a coat-of-arms," said Aurélie, seeking a letter in a handsome bag that hung by the fireplace, and handing it to Maxime. "What does it all mean? There are combs on it."

"He bears: Quarterly, the first argent three combs gules, second and third three bunches of grapes with stems and leaves all proper, fourth azure four pens or, laid in fret. Motto, *Servir,* and a squire's helmet.—No great things! They were granted by Louis XV.—They must have had some haberdasher grandfather, the maternal ancestry made money in wine, and the du Ronceret who got the arms must have been a registrar.—But if you succeed in throwing off Arthur, the du Roncerets shall be Barons at least, I promise you, my pretty pigeon. You see, child, you must lie in pickle for five or six years in the country if you want to bury la Schontz in

Madame la Présidente. The rascal cast eyes at you, of which the meaning was quite clear; you have hooked him."

"No," said Aurélie. "When I offered him my hand, he was as quiet as brandy is in the market."

"I will make up his mind for him if he is tipsy. Go and see how they are all getting on."

"It is not worth the trouble of going. I hear no one but Bixiou giving one of his caricatures, to which nobody is listening; but I know my Arthur; he thinks it necessary to be polite to Bixiou, and he is staring at him still, even if his eyes are shut."

"Let us go back then."

"By the by, for whose benefit am I doing all this, Maxime?" said Madame Schontz suddenly.

"For Madame de Rochefide," replied Maxime bluntly. "It is impossible to patch up matters between her and Arthur so long as you keep hold of him. To her it is a matter of being at the head of her house and having four hundred thousand francs a year."

"And she only offers me two hundred thousand francs down? I will have three hundred thousand if she is at the bottom of it. What, I have taken every care of her brat and her husband, I have filled her place in every way, and she is to beat me down? Look here, my dear fellow, I shall then have just a million. And besides that, you promise me the Presidency of the Court at Alençon if only I can make up for Madame du Ronceret——"

"Right you are!" said Maxime.

"How I shall be bored in that little town!" said Aurélie philosophically. "I have heard so much about that part of the country from d'Esgrignon and Madame Val-Noble, that it is as though I had lived there already."

"But if I could promise you the help of the title?"

"Oh, Maxime, if you can really do that.—Ay, but the pigeon refuses to fly——"

"And he is very ugly, with his skin like a plum; he has bristles instead of whiskers, and looks like a wild boar,

though he has eyes like a bird of prey. He will be the finest President ever seen.—Be easy! In ten minutes he will be singing you Isabelle's song in the fourth act of *Robert le Diable, 'Je suis à tes genoux.'*—But you must undertake to send Arthur back to fall at Béatrix's feet."

"It is difficult, but among us we may manage it."

At about half-past ten the gentlemen came into the drawing-room to take coffee. In the position in which Madame Schontz, Couture, and du Ronceret found themselves, it is easy to imagine the effect that was produced on the ambitious Norman by the following conversation between Couture and Maxime in a corner, carried on indeed in an undertone that they might not be overheard, but which Fabien contrived to hear.

"My dear fellow, if you were wise, you would accept the place of Receiver-General in some out-of-the-way place; Madame de Rochefide would get it for you. Aurélie's million francs would enable you to deposit the security, and you would settle everything on her as your wife. Then, if you steered your boat cleverly, you would be made deputy, and the only premium I ask for having saved you will be your vote in the Chamber."

"I shall always be proud to serve under you."

"Oh, my boy, you have had a very close shave! Just fancy, Aurélie thought herself in love with that Norman from Alençon; she wanted to have him made a Baron, President of the Court in his native town, and officer of the Legion of Honor. The noodle never guessed what Madame Schontz was worth, and you owe your good fortune to her disgust; so do not give such a clever woman time to change her mind. For my part, I will go and put the irons in the fire."

So Maxime left Couture in the seventh heaven of happiness, and said to la Palférine, "Shall I take you with me, my son?"

By eleven o'clock Aurélie found herself left with Couture, Fabien, and Rochefide. Arthur was asleep in an armchair; Couture and Fabien were trying to out-stay each other, but

without success. Madame Schontz put an end to this contest by saying to Couture, "Till to-morrow, dear boy!" which he took in good part.

"Mademoiselle," said Fabien, in a low voice, "when you saw me so unready to respond to the proposal you made me indirectly, do not imagine that there was the smallest hesitation on my part; but you do not know my mother; she would never consent to my happiness . . ."

"You are of age to address her with a *sommation respectueuse,** my dear fellow," retorted Aurélie insolently. "However, if you are afraid of mamma, you are not the man for my money."

"Joséphine!" said the Heir affectionately, as he boldly put his right arm round Madame Schontz's waist, "I believed that you loved me."

"And what then?"

"I might perhaps pacify my mother, and gain more than her consent."

"How?"

"If you would use your influence——"

"To get you created Baron, officer of the Legion of Honor, and President of the Court, my boy—is that it?—Listen to me, I have done so many things in the course of my life, that I am capable of being virtuous! I could be an honest woman, a loyal wife, and take my husband in tow to upper regions; but I insist on being so loved by him that not a glance, not a thought, shall ever be given to any heart but mine, not even in a wish. . . . How does that do for you? Do not bind yourself rashly; it is for life, my boy."

"With a woman like you, done, without looking twice!" cried Fabien, as much intoxicated by a look as he was by the West Indian liqueurs.

"You shall never repent of that word, my brave boy; you shall be a peer of France.—As to that poor old chap," she went on, looking at Rochefide asleep, "it is a, double l, all, o-v-e-r, ver—all over!"

* A legal form by which French sons can reduce the obstinacy of recalcitrant parents when they refuse their consent to a marriage.

She said it so cleverly, so prettily, that Fabien seized Madame Schontz and kissed her with an impulse of passion and joy, in which the intoxication of love and wine were second to that of happiness and ambition.

"But now, my dear child," said she, "you must remember henceforth to behave respectfully to your wife, not to play the lover, and to leave me to get out of my slough as decently as may be.—And Couture, who believed himself a rich man and Receiver-General!——"

"I have a horror of the man," said Fabien. "I wish I might never see him again!"

"I will have him here no more," said the courtesan with a little prudish air. "Now that we understand each other, my Fabien, go; it is one o'clock."

This little scene gave rise in the Schontz household, hitherto so perfectly happy, to a phase of domestic warfare between Arthur and Aurélie, such as any covert interest on the part of one of the partners is certain to give rise to.

The very next day Arthur woke to find himself alone; Madame Schontz was cold, as women of that sort know how to be.

"What happened last night?" asked he at breakfast, looking at Aurélie.

"That is the way of it, in Paris," said she. "You go to bed on a wet night, next morning the pavement is dry, and everything so frozen that the dust flies; would you like a brush?"

"But what ails you, dear little woman?"

"Go, go to your great gawk of a wife!"

"My wife?" cried the unhappy Marquis.

"Couldn't I guess why you brought Maxime here? You wanted to make it up with Madame de Rochefide, who wants you perhaps for some tell-tale baby.—And I, whom you think so cunning, was advising you to give her back her money!—Oh, I know your tricks. After five years my gentleman is tired of me. I am fat, Béatrix is bony; it will be a change. You are not the first man I have known with a taste for

skeletons. Your Béatrix dresses well too, and you are one of the men who like a clothes-horse. Besides, you want to send Monsieur du Guénic packing. That would be a triumph! How well it will look! Won't it be talked about! You will be quite a hero!"

At two o'clock Madame Schontz had not come to an end of her ironical banter, in spite of Arthur's protestations. She said she was engaged to dine out. She desired the "faithless one" to go without her to the Italiens; she was going to a first-night performance at the Ambigu-Comique, and to make the acquaintance of a charming woman, Lousteau's mistress, Madame de la Baudraye.

To prove his eternal attachment to his little Aurélie, and his aversion for his wife, Arthur offered to set out the very next day for Italy, and to live as her husband in Rome, Naples, or Florence, whichever Aurélie might prefer, giving her sixty thousand francs a year.

"All that is pure whims," said she. "That will not hinder your making it up with your wife, and you will be wise to do so."

At the end of this formidable discussion, Arthur and Aurélie parted, he to play and dine at the club, she to dress and spend the evening *tête-à-tête* with Fabien.

Monsieur de Rochefide found Maxime at the club, and poured out his complaints, as a man who felt happiness being torn up from his heart by the roots that clung by every fibre. Maxime listened to the Marquis' lament as polite people can listen while thinking of something else.

"I am a capital counselor in such cases, my dear fellow," said he. "Well, you make a great mistake in letting Aurélie see how much you care for her. Let me introduce you to Madame Antonia—a heart to let. You will see la Schontz sing very small. Why, she is seven-and-thirty, is your Schontz, and Antonia is but twenty-six! And such a woman! Her wits are not all in her brains, I can tell you. Indeed, she is my pupil. If Madame Schontz still struts out her pride, do you know what it means?"

"On my honor, no."

"That she means to get married; and then nothing can hinder her from throwing you over. After a six years' lease the woman has a right to do it.—But if you will listen to me, you can do better than that. At the present time your wife is worth a thousand Schontzes and Antonias of the Saint-Georges quarter. She will be hard to win, but not impossible; and she will make you as happy as Orgon! At any rate, if you do not wish to look like a fool, come to supper to-night at Antonia's."

"No, I love Aurélie too well; I will not allow her to have any cause for blaming me."

"Oh, my dear fellow! what a life you are making for yourself!" cried Maxime.

"It is eleven o'clock. She will have returned from the Ambigu," said Rochefide, going off. And he roared at the coachman to drive as fast as he could to the Rue de la Bruyère.

Madame Schontz had given distinct orders, and Monsieur was admitted exactly as though he and Madame were the best of friends; but Madame, informed of Monsieur's return, took care to let Monsieur hear the slam of her dressing-room door, shut as doors shut when a lady is taken by surprise. Then, on the corner of the piano, was Fabien's hat, intentionally forgotten, and conspicuously fetched away by the maid as soon as Monsieur and Madame were engaged in conversation.

"So you did not go to the play, little woman?"

"No, I changed my mind."

"And who has been here?" he asked quite simply, seeing the maid carry away the hat.

"Nobody."

To this audacious falsehood Arthur could only bow his head; this was passing under the Caudine forks of submission. True love has this magnanimous cowardice. Arthur behaved to Madame Schontz as Sabine did to Calyste, as Calyste did to Béatrix.

Within a week there was a change like that of a grub to a butterfly in the handsome and clever young Count, Charles-Edouard Rusticoli de la Palférine (the hero of the sketch called *A Prince of Bohemia,* which makes it unnecessary to describe his person and character in this place). Hitherto he had lived very poorly, making up his deficits with the audacity of a Danton; now he paid his debts, by Maxime's advice he had a little low carriage, he was elected to the Jockey Club, to the club in the Rue de Grammont, he became superlatively elegant. Finally, he published in the *Journal des Débats* a novel which earned him in a few days such a reputation as professional writers do not achieve after many years of labor and success, for in Paris nothing is so vehement as what is to prove ephemeral. Nathan, perfectly certain that the Count would never write anything more, praised this elegant and impertinent youth to Madame de Rochefide in such terms, that Béatrix, spurred on by the poet's account of him, expressed a wish to see this prince of fashionable vagabonds.

"He will be all the more delighted to come here," replied Nathan, "because I know he is so much in love with you as to commit any folly."

"But he has committed every folly already, I am told."

"Every folly? No," replied Nathan, "he has not yet been so foolish as to love a decent woman."

A few days after the plot of the Boulevard had been laid between Maxime and the seductive Count Charles-Edouard, this young gentleman, on whom Nature had bestowed—in irony, no doubt—a pathetically melancholy countenance, made his first incursion into the nest in the Rue de Courcelles, where the dove, to receive him, fixed an evening when Calyste was obliged to go out with his wife. If ever you meet la Palférine—or when you come to the *Prince of Bohemia* in the third part of this long picture of modern manners—you will at once understand the triumph achieved in a single evening by that sparkling wit, those astonishing high spirits, especially if you can conceive of the capital by-play of the sponsor who

agreed to second him on this occasion. Nathan was a good fellow; he showed off the young Count as a jeweler shows off a necklace he wants to sell, by making the stones sparkle in the light.

La Palférine discreetly was the first to leave; he left Nathan and the Marquise together, trusting to the great author's co-operation, which was admirable. Seeing the Marquise quite amazed, he fired her fancy by a certain reticence, which stirred in her such chords of curiosity as she did not know existed in her. Nathan gave her to understand that it was not so much la Palférine's wit that won him his successes with women as his superior gifts in the art of love; and he cried him up beyond measure.

This is the place for setting forth a novel result of the great law of contrasts, which gives rise to many a crisis in the human heart, and accounts for so many vagaries that we are forced to refer to it sometimes, as well as to the law of affinities. Courtesans—including all that portion of the female sex which is named, unnamed, and renamed every quarter of a century—all preserve, in the depths of their hearts, a vigorous wish to recover their liberty, to feel a pure, saintly, and heroic love for some man to whom they can sacrifice everything. (See *A Harlot's Progress.*) They feel this antithetical need so keenly, that it is rare to find a woman of the kind who has not many times aspired to become virtuous through love. The most frightful deception cannot discourage them. Women who are, on the contrary, restrained by education, and by their rank in life, fettered by the dignity of their family, living in the midst of wealth, crowned by a halo of virtue, are tempted—secretly, of course—to try the tropical regions of passion. These two antagonistic types of women have, at the bottom of their hearts, the one a little craving for virtue, the other a little craving for dissipation, which Jean-Jacques Rousseau first had the courage to point out. In those it is the last gleam of the divine light not yet extinct; in these it is a trace of the primitive clay.

This remaining claw of the beast was tickled, this hair of

the devil was pulled with the greatest skill, by Nathan. The Marquise seriously wondered whether she had not hitherto been the dupe of her intellect, whether her education was complete. Vice!—is perhaps the desire to know everything.

Next day Calyste was seen by Béatrix as what he was—a perfect and loyal gentleman, devoid of spirit and wit.

In Paris, to be known as a wit, a man's wit must flow as water flows from a spring; for all men of fashion, and Parisians in general, are witty. But Calyste was too much in love, he was too much absorbed to observe the change in Béatrix, and satisfy her by opening up fresh veins; he was very colorless in the reflected light of the previous evening, and could not give the greedy Béatrix the smallest excitement. A great love is a credit account open to such voracious drafts on it that the moment of bankruptcy is inevitable.

In spite of the weariness of this day—the day when a woman is bored by her lover!—Béatrix shuddered with fears as she thought of a duel between la Palférine, the successor of Maxime de Trailles, and Calyste du Guénic, a brave man without brag. She therefore hesitated to see the young Count any more; but the knot was cut by a simple incident. Béatrix had a third share in a box at the Italiens—a dark box on the pit tier where she might not be seen. For some few days Calyste had been so bold as to accompany the Marquise and sit behind her, timing their arrival late enough to attract no attention. Béatrix was always one of the first to leave before the end of the last act, and Calyste escorted her, keeping an eye on her, though old Antoine was in waiting on his mistress.

Maxime and la Palférine studied these tactics, dictated by the proprieties, by the love of concealment characteristic of the "Eternal Baby," and also by a dread that weighs on every woman who, having once been a constellation of fashion, has fallen for love from her rank in the zodiac. She then fears humiliation as a worse agony than death; but this agony of pride, this shipwreck, which women who have kept their place on Olympus inflict on those who have fallen, came upon her,

by Maxime's contriving, under the most horrible circumstances.

At a performance of *Lucia,* which ended, as is well known, by one of Rubini's greatest triumphs, Madame de Rochefide, before she was called by Antoine, came out from the corridor into the vestibule of the theatre, where the stairs were crowded with pretty women, grouped on the steps, or standing in knots till their servants should bring up their carriages. Béatrix was at once recognized by all; a whisper ran through every group, rising to a murmur. In the twinkling of an eye every woman vanished; the Marquise was left alone as if plague-stricken. Calyste, seeing his wife on one of the staircases, dared not join the outcast, and it was in vain that Béatrix twice gave him a tearful look, an entreaty to come to her support. At that moment la Palférine, elegant, lordly and charming, quitted two other women, and came, with a bow, to talk to the Marquise.

"Take my arm and come defiantly with me; I can find your carriage," said he.

"Will you finish the evening with me?" she replied, as she got into her carriage and made room for him by her side.

La Palférine said to his groom, "Follow Madame's carriage," and got in with Madame de Rochefide, to Calyste's amazement. He was left standing, planted on his feet as though they were made of lead, for it was on seeing him looking pale and blank that Béatrix had invited the young Count to accompany her. Every dove is a Robespierre in white feathers.

Three carriages arrived together at the Rue de Courcelles with lightning swiftness—Calyste's, la Palférine's, and the Marquise's.

"So you are here?" said Béatrix, on going into her drawing-room leaning on the young Count's arm, and finding Calyste already there, his horse having out-distanced the other two carriages.

"So you are acquainted with this gentleman?" said Calyste to Béatrix with suppressed fury.

"Monsieur le Comte de la Palférine was introduced to me by Nathan ten days ago," said Béatrix; "and you, monsieur, have known me for four years——"

"And I am ready, madame," said la Palférine, "to make Madame d'Espard repent of having been the first to turn her back on you—down to her grandchildren——"

"Oh, it was *she?*" cried Béatrix. "I will pay her out."

"If you want to be revenged, you must win back your husband, but I am prepared to bring him back to you," said la Palférine in her ear.

The conversation thus begun was carried on till two in the morning, without giving Calyste an opportunity of speaking two words apart to Béatrix, who constantly kept his rage in subjection by her glances. La Palférine, who was not in love with her, was as superior in good taste, wit, and charm as Calyste was beneath himself; writhing on his seat like a worm cut in two, and thrice starting to his feet with an impulse to stop la Palférine. The third time that Calyste flew at his rival, the Count said, "Are you in pain, monsieur?" in a tone that made Calyste sit down on the nearest chair, and remain as immovable as an image.

The Marquise chatted with the light ease of a Célimène, ignoring Calyste's presence. La Palférine was so supremely clever as to depart on a last witty speech, leaving the two lovers at war.

Thus, by Maxime's skill, the flames of discord were raging in the divided households of Monsieur and Madame de Rochefide.

On the morrow, having heard from la Palférine, at the Jockey Club, where the young Count was playing whist with great profit, of the success of the scene he had plotted, Maxime went to the Hôtel Schontz to ascertain how Aurélie was managing her affairs.

"My dear fellow," cried Madame Schontz, laughing as she saw him, "I am at my wits' end. I am closing my career with the discovery that it is a misfortune to be clever."

"Explain your meaning."

"In the first place, my dear friend, I kept my Arthur for

a week on a regimen of kicking his shins, with the most patriotic old stories and the most unpleasant discipline known in our profession. 'You are ill,' said he with fatherly mildness, 'for I have never been anything but kind to you, and I perfectly adore you.'—'You have one fault, my dear,' said I; 'you bore me.'—'Well, but have you not all the cleverest men and the handsomest young fellows in Paris to amuse you?' said the poor man. I was shut up. Then I felt that I loved him."

"Hah!" said Maxime.

"What is to be done? These ways are too much for us; it is impossible to resist them. Then I changed the stop; I made eyes at that wild boar of a lawyer, my future husband, as great a sheep now as Arthur; I made him sit there in Rochefide's armchair, and I thought him a perfect fool. How bored I was!—But, of course, I had to keep Fabien there that we might be discovered together——"

"Well," cried Maxime, "get on with your story! When Rochefide found you together, what next?"

"You would never guess, my good fellow. By your instructions the banns are published, the marriage contract is being drawn, Notre-Dame de Lorette is out of court. When it is a case of matrimony, something may be paid on account. —When he found us together, Fabien and me, poor Arthur stole off on tiptoe to the dining-room, and began growling and clearing his throat and knocking the chairs about. That great gaby Fabien, to whom I cannot tell everything, was frightened, and that, my dear Maxime, is the point we have reached.—Why, if Arthur should find the couple of us some morning on coming into my room, he is capable of saying, 'Have you had a pleasant night, children?' "

Maxime nodded his head, and for some minutes sat twirling his cane.

"I know the sort of man," said he. "This is what you must do; there is no help for it but to throw Arthur out the window and keep the door tightly shut. You must begin again the same scene with Fabien——"

"How intolerable! For, after all, you see, the sacrament has not yet blessed me with virtue. . . ."

"You must contrive to catch Arthur's eye when he finds you together," Maxime went on; "if he gets angry, there is an end of the matter. If he only growls as before, there is yet more an end of it."

"How?"

"Well, you must be angry; you must say, 'I thought you loved and valued me; but you have ceased to care for me; you feel no jealousy——,' but you know it all, chapter and verse.—'Under such circumstances Maxime' (drag me in) 'would kill his man on the spot' (and cry). 'And Fabien' (make him ashamed of himself by comparing him with Fabien)—'Fabien would have a dagger ready to stab you to the heart. That is what I call love! There, go! Good-night, good-bye! Take back your house; I am going to marry Fabien. He will give me his name, he will! He has thrown over his old mother!'—In short, you——"

"Of course, of course! I will be magnificent!" cried Madame Schontz. "Ah, Maxime! There will never be but one Maxime, as there never was but one de Marsay."

"La Palférine is greater than I," said de Trailles modestly. "He is getting on famously."

"He has a tongue, but you have backbone and a grip. How many people have you kept going! How many have you doubled up!"

"La Palférine has every qualification; he is deep and well informed, while I am ignorant," replied Maxime.—"I have seen Rastignac, who came to terms at once with the Keeper of the Seals. Fabien will be made President of the Court and officer of the Legion of Honor after a year's probation."

"I will take up religion," replied Madame Schontz, emphasizing the phrase so as to win an approving look from Maxime.

"Priests are worth a hundred of us!" said Maxime.

"Really?" said Aurélie. "Then I may find some one to talk to in a country town.—I have begun my part. Fabien

has already told his mother that grace has dawned on me, and he has bewitched the good woman with my million and his Presidency; she agrees that we are to live with her; she asked for a portrait of me, and has sent me hers; if Love were to look at it, he would fall backwards.—Go then, Maxime; I will demolish the poor man this evening. It goes to my heart."

Two days later la Palférine and Maxime met at the door of the Jockey-Club.

"It is done," said Charles-Édouard.

The words, containing a whole horrible and terrible drama, such as vengeance often carries out, made the Comte de Trailles smile.

"We shall have all de Rochefide's jeremiads," said Maxime, "for you and Aurélie have finished together. Aurélie has turned Arthur out of doors, and now we must get hold of him. He is to give three hundred thousand francs to Madame du Ronceret and return to his wife. We will prove to him that Béatrix is superior to Aurélie."

"We have at least ten days before us," said Charles-Édouard sapiently, "and not too much in all conscience; for now I know the Marquise, and the poor man will be handsomely fleeced."

"What will you do when the bomb bursts?"

"We can always be clever when we have time to think it out; I am grand when I am able to prepare for it."

The two gamblers went into the drawing-room together, and found the Marquis de Rochefide looking two years older; he had no stays on; he had sacrificed his elegance; his beard had grown.

"Well, my dear Marquis?" said Maxime.

"Oh, my dear fellow, my life is broken . . ." and for ten minutes Arthur talked, and Maxime gravely listened; he was thinking of his marriage, which was to take place a week hence.

"My dear Arthur, I advised you of the only means I knew of to keep Aurélie, and you did not choose . . ."

"What means?"

"Did I not advise you to go to supper with Antonia?"

"Quite true.—How can I help it? I love her.—And you, you make love as Grisier fences."

"Listen to me, Arthur; give her three hundred thousand francs for her little house, and I promise you I will find you something better. I will speak to you again of the unknown fair one by and by; I see d'Ajuda, who wants to say two words to me."

And Maxime left the inconsolable man to talk to the representative of the family needing consolation.

"My dear fellow," said the other Marquis in an undertone, "the Duchess is in despair; Calyste has quietly packed up and procured a passport. Sabine wants to follow the fugitives, catch Béatrix, and claw her. She is expecting another child; and the whole thing looks rather murderous, for she has gone quite openly and bought pistols."

"Tell the Duchess that Madame de Rochefide is not going, and within a fortnight the whole thing will be settled. Now, d'Ajuda, your hand on it? Neither you nor I have said anything or known anything. We shall admire the effects of chance"

"The Duchess has already made me swear secrecy on the Gospels and the Cross."

"You will receive my wife a month hence?"

"With pleasure."

"Everybody will be satisfied," replied Maxime. "Only warn the Duchess that something is about to happen which will delay her departure for Italy for six weeks; it concerns Monsieur du Guénic. You will know all about it later."

"What is it?" asked d'Ajuda, who was looking at la Palférine.

"Socrates said before his death, 'We owe a cock to Æsculapius.' But your brother-in-law will be let off for the comb," replied la Palférine without hesitation.

For ten days Calyste endured the burthen of a woman's anger, all the more implacable because it was seconded by a

real passion. Béatrix felt that form of love so roughly but truly described to the Duchess by Maxime de Trailles. Perhaps there is no highly organized being that does not experience this overwhelming passion once in a lifetime. The Marquise felt herself quelled by a superior force, by a young man who was not impressed by her rank, who, being of as noble birth as herself, could look at her with a calm and powerful eye, and from whom her greatest feminine efforts could scarcely extract a smile of admiration. Finally, she was crushed by a tyrant, who always left her bathed in tears, deeply hurt, and believing herself wronged. Charles-Édouard played the same farce on Madame de Rochefide that she had been playing these six months on Calyste.

Since the scene of her mortification at the Italiens, Béatrix had adhered to one formula:

"You preferred the world and your wife to me, so you do not love me. If you wish to prove that you do love me, sacrifice your wife and the world. Give up Sabine, leave her, and let us go to live in Switzerland, in Italy, or in Germany."

Justifying herself by this cool ultimatum, she had established the sort of blockade which women carry into effect by cold looks, scornful shrugs, and a face like a stone citadel. She believed herself rid of Calyste; she thought he would never venture on a breach with the Grandlieus. To give up Sabine, to whom Mademoiselle des Touches had given her fortune, meant poverty for him.

However, Calyste, mad with despair, had secretly procured a passport, and begged his mother to forward him a considerable sum. While waiting for the money to reach him, he kept watch over Béatrix, himself a victim to the jealousy of a Breton. At last, nine days after the fateful communication made by la Palférine to Maxime at the club, the Baron, to whom his mother had sent thirty thousand francs, flew to the Rue de Courcelles, determined to force the blockade, to turn out la Palférine, and to leave Paris with his idol appeased.

This was one of those fearful alternatives when a woman who has preserved a fragment of self-respect may sink for

ever into the depths of vice, but may, on the other hand, return to virtue. Hitherto Madame de Rochefide had regarded herself as a virtuous woman, whose heart had been invaded by two passions; but to love Charles-Édouard, and allow herself to be loved by Calyste, would wreck her self-esteem; for where falsehood begins, infamy begins. She had granted rights to Calyste, and no human power could hinder the Breton from throwing himself at her feet and watering them with the tears of abject repentance. Many persons wonder to see the icy insensibility under which women smother their passions; but if they could not thus blot out the past, life for them would be bereft of dignity; they could never escape from the inevitable collusion to which they had once succumbed.

In her entirely new position Béatrix would have been saved if la Palférine had come to her; but old Antoine's alertness was her ruin.

On hearing a carriage stop at the door, she exclaimed to Calyste, "Here are visitors!" and she hurried away to prevent a catastrophe.

Antoine, a prudent man, replied to Charles-Édouard, who had called solely to hear these very words, "Madame is gone out."

When Béatrix heard from the old servant that the young Count had called, and what he had been told, she said, "Quite right," and returned to the drawing-room, saying to herself, "I will be a nun!"

Calyste, who had made so bold as to open the window, caught sight of his rival.

"Who was it?" he asked.

"I do not know; Antoine has not come up yet."

"It was la Palférine——"

"Very possibly."

"You love him, and that is why you find fault with me.—I saw him!"

"You saw him?"

"I opened the window."

Béatrix dropped half dead on the sofa. Then she tried to

temporize to save the future; she put off their departure for ten days on the plea of business, and vowed to herself that she would close her door against Calyste if only she could pacify la Palférine, for these are the horrible compromises and burning torments that underlie lives that have gone off the rails on which the great train of Society runs.

As soon as Béatrix was alone she felt so miserable, so deeply humiliated, that she went to bed; she was ill; the fearful struggle that rent her heart seemed to leave a horrible reaction, and she sent for the doctor; but, at the same time, she despatched to la Palférine the following note, in which she avenged herself on Calyste with a sort of frenzy:—

"Come to see me, my friend, I am in desperation. Antoine turned you away when your visit would have put an end to one of the most horrible nightmares of my life, by rescuing me from a man I hate, whom I hope never to see again. I love no one on earth but you, and I never shall love any one but you, though I am so unhappy as not to please you so much as I could wish . . ."

She covered four pages, which, having begun thus, ended in a rhapsody far too poetical to be reproduced in print, in which Béatrix so effectually compromised herself, that in conclusion she said:

"Am I not wholly at your mercy? Ah, no price would be too great for me to prove how dearly you are loved!"

And she signed her name, a thing she had never done for either Calyste or Conti.

On the following day, when the young Count called on the Marquise, she was taking a bath. Antoine begged him to wait. But he dismissed Calyste in his turn, when, starving with passion, he also came early; and la Palférine could see him as he got into his carriage again in despair.

"Oh, Charles," said the Marquise coming into the drawing-room, "you have ruined me!"

"I know it, madame," replied he coolly. "You swore that

you loved me alone, you offered to give me a letter in which you will set down the reasons you would have had for killing yourself, so that in the event of your being unfaithful to me I might poison you without fear of human justice—as if superior souls needed to resort to poison to avenge themselves!—You wrote, 'No price would be too great for me to prove how dearly you are loved!'—Well, I find a contradiction between these closing words of your letter and your speech, 'You have ruined me.' I will know now whether you have had the courage to break with du Guénic."

"You are revenged on him beforehand," said she throwing her arms round his neck. "And that matter is enough to bind you and me for ever——"

"Madame," said the Prince of bohemia coldly, "if you desire my friendship, I consent; but there are conditions——"

"Conditions?"

"Yes, conditions—as follows: You must be reconciled with Monsieur de Rochefide, resume the honors of your position, return to your fine house in the Rue d'Anjou—you will be one of the queens of Paris. You can achieve this by making Rochefide play a part in politics and guiding your conduct with such skill and tenacity as Madame d'Espard has displayed. This is the position which any woman must fill whom I am to honor with my devotion——"

"But you forget that Monsieur de Rochefide's consent is necessary."

"Oh, my dear child," replied la Palférine, "we have prepared him for it. I have pledged my honor as a gentleman that you were worth all the Schontzes of the Quartier Saint-Georges put together, and you owe it to my honor——"

For eight days, every day, Calyste called on Béatrix, and was invariably sent away by Antoine, who put on a grave face and assured him, "Madame la Marquise is seriously ill."

From thence Calyste rushed off to la Palférine, whose servant always exclaimed, "Monsieur le Comte is gone hunting." And each time Calyste left a letter for the Count.

At last, on the ninth day, Calyste, in reply to a note from la Palférine fixing a time for an explanation, found him at home, but with him Maxime de Trailles, to whom the younger rake wished, no doubt, to give proof of his abilities by getting him to witness the scene.

"Monsieur le Baron," said Charles-Édouard quietly, "here are the six notes you have done me the honor of writing to me. They are unopened, just as you sent them; I knew beforehand what might be in them when I heard that you had been seeking me everywhere since the day when I looked at you out of the window, while you were at the door of a house where, on the previous day, I had been at the door while you were at the window. I thought it best to remain ignorant of an ill-judged challenge. Between you and me, you have too much good taste to owe a woman a grudge because she has ceased to love you. And to fight your preferred rival is a bad way to reinstate yourself.

"Also, in the present case, your letters were invalidated, null and void, as lawyers say, in consequence of a radical error: you have too much good sense to quarrel with a husband for taking back his wife. Monsieur de Rochefide feels the Marquise's position is undignified. You will no longer find Madame de Rochefide in the Rue de Courcelles; six months hence, next winter, you will see her in her husband's home. You very rashly thrust yourself into the midst of a reconciliation between a married couple to which you yourself gave rise by failing to shelter Madame de Rochefide from the mortification she endured at the opera-house. As we left, Béatrix, to whom I had already brought some friendly advances on her husband's part, took me in her carriage, and her first words were, 'Go and bring Arthur!'

"Oh, Heavens!" cried Calyste, "she was right; I had failed in my devotion——"

"But, unfortunately, monsieur, poor Arthur was living with one of those dreadful women—that Madame Schontz, who for a long time had expected every hour to find herself deserted. Madame Schontz, who, on the strength of Béatrix's

complexion, cherished a desire to see herself some day the Marquise de Rochefide, was furious when she saw her castles in the air fallen. Those women, monsieur, will lose an eye if they can spoil two for an enemy; la Schontz, who has just left Paris, has been the instrument of spoiling six! And if I had been so rash as to love Béatrix, the sum-total would have been eight. You, monsieur, must have discovered that you need an oculist."

Maxime could not help smiling at the change in Calyste's face; he turned pale as his eyes were opened to the situation.

"Would you believe, Monsieur le Baron, that that wretched woman has consented to marry the man who furnished her with means of revenge? Oh! women!—You understand now why Béatrix should shut herself up with Arthur for a few months at Nogent-sur-Marne, where they have a charming little house; they will recover their sight there. Meanwhile their house will be entirely redecorated; the Marquise means to display a princely style of splendor. When a man is sincerely in love with so noble a woman, so great, so exquisite, the victim of conjugal devotion, as soon as she has the courage to return to her duties as a wife, the part of those who adore her as you do, who admire her as I do, is to remain her friends when they can be nothing more.

"You will forgive me for having thought it well to invite Monsieur de Trailles to be present at this explanation, but I was particularly anxious to make this all perfectly clear. For my part, I especially wished to assure you that, though I admire Madame de Rochefide's cleverness as a woman, she is to me supremely odious."

"And that is what our fairest dreams, our celestial loves end in," said Calyste, overwhelmed by so many revelations and disenchantments.

"In a fish's tail," cried Maxime, "or, which is worse, in an apothecary's gallipot! I have never known a first love that did not end idiotically. Ah, Monsieur le Baron, whatever there may be that is heavenly in man finds its nourishment in Heaven alone! This is the excuse for us rakes. I, monsieur,

have gone deeply into the question, and, as you see, I am just married. I shall be faithful to my wife, and I would urge you to return to Madame du Guénic—but—three months hence.

"Do not regret Béatrix; she is a pattern of those vain natures, devoid of energy, but flirts out of vainglory—a Madame d'Espard without political faculty, a woman devoid of heart and brain, frivolous in wickedness. Madame de Rochefide loves no one but Madame de Rochefide; she would have involved you in an irremediable quarrel with Madame du Guénic, and then have thrown you over without a qualm; in fact, she is as inadequate for vice as for virtue."

"I do not agree with you, Maxime," said la Palférine; "she will be the most delightful mistress of a great house in all Paris."

Calyste did not leave the house without shaking hands with Charles-Édouard and Maxime de Trailles, thanking them for having cured him of his illusions.

Three days later the Duchesse de Grandlieu, who had not seen her daughter Sabine since the morning of the great conference, called one morning and found Calyste in his bathroom. Sabine was sewing at some new finery for her baby-clothes.

"Well, how are you children getting on?" asked the kind Duchess.

"As well as possible, dear mamma," replied Sabine, looking at her mother with eyes bright with happiness. "We have acted out the fable of the Two Pigeons—that is all."

Calyste held out his hand to his wife and pressed hers tenderly.

1838-1844.

THE JEALOUSIES OF A COUNTRY TOWN

AND

THE COMMISSION IN LUNACY

INTRODUCTION

THE two stories of *Les Rivalités* are more closely connected than it was always Balzac's habit to connect the tales which he united under a common heading. Not only are both devoted to the society of Alençon—a town and neighborhood to which he had evidently strong, though it is not clearly known what, attractions—not only is the Chevalier de Valois a notable figure in each; but the community, imparted by the elaborate study of the old *noblesse* in each case, is even greater than either of these ties could give. Indeed, if instead of *Les Rivalités* the author had chosen some label indicating the study of the *noblesse qui s'en va,* it might almost have been preferable. He did not, however; and though in a man who so constantly changed his titles and his arrangements the actual ones are not excessively authoritative, they have authority.

La Vieille Fille, despite a certain tone of levity—which, to do Balzac justice, is not common with him, and which is rather hard upon the poor heroine—is one of the best and liveliest things he ever did. The opening picture of the Chevalier, though, like other things of its author's, especially in his overtures, liable to the charge of being elaborated a little too much, is one of the very best things of its kind, and is a sort of *locus classicus* for its subject. The whole picture of country town society is about as good as it can be; and the only blot that I know is to be found in the sentimental Athanase, who was not quite within Balzac's province, ex-

tensive as that province is. If we compare Mr. Augustus Moddle, we shall see one of the not too numerous instances in which Dickens has a clear advantage over Balzac; and if it be retorted that Balzac's object was not to present a merely ridiculous object, the rejoinder is not very far to seek. Such a character, with such a fate as Balzac has assigned to him, must be either humorously grotesque or unfeignedly pathetic, and Balzac has not quite made Athanase either.

He is, however, if he is a failure, about the only failure in the book, and he is atoned for by a whole bundle of successes. Of the Chevalier, little more need be said. Balzac, it must be remembered, was the oldest novelist of distinct genius who had the opportunity of delineating the survivors of the *ancien régime* from the life, and directly. It is certain —even if we hesitate at believing him quite so familiar with all the classes of higher society from the *Faubourg* downwards, as he would have us believe him—that he saw something of most of them, and his genius was unquestionably of the kind to which a mere thumbnail study, a mere passing view, suffices for the acquisition of a thorough working knowledge of the object. In this case the Chevalier has served, and not improperly served, as the original of a thousand after-studies. His rival, less carefully projected, is also perhaps a little less alive. Again, Balzac was old enough to have foregathered with many men of the Revolution. But the most characteristic of them were not long-lived, the "little window" and other things having had a bad effect on them; and most of those who survived had, by the time he was old enough to take much notice, gone through metamorphoses of Bonapartism, Constitutional Liberalism, and what not. But still du Bousquier *is* alive, as well as all the minor

assistants and spectators in the battle for the old maid's hand. Suzanne, that tactful and graceless Suzanne to whom we are introduced first of all, is very much alive; and for all her gracelessness, not at all disagreeable. I am only sorry that she sold the counterfeit presentment of the Princess Goritza after all.

Le Cabinet des Antiques, in its Alençon scenes, is a worthy pendant to *La Vieille Fille.* The old-world honor of the Marquis d'Esgrignon, the thankless sacrifices of Armande, the *prisca fides* of Maître Chesnel, present pictures for which, out of Balzac, we can look only in Jules Sandeau, and which in Sandeau, though they are presented with a more poetical touch, have less masterly outline than here. One takes—or, at least, I take—less interest in the ignoble intrigues of the other side, except in so far as they menace the fortunes of a worthy house unworthily represented. Victurnien d'Esgrignon, like his companion, Savinien de Portenduère (who, however, is, in every respect, a very much better fellow), does not argue in Balzac any high opinion of the *fils de famille.* He is, in fact, an extremely feeble youth, who does not seem to have got much real satisfaction out of the escapades, for which he risked not merely his family's fortune, but his own honor, and who would seem to have been a rake, not from natural taste and spirit and relish, but because it seemed to him to be the proper thing to be. But the beginnings of the fortune of the aspiring and intriguing Camusots are admirably painted; and Madame de Maufrigneuse, that rather doubtful divinity, who appears so frequently in Balzac, here acts the *dea ex machina* with considerable effect. And we end well (as we generally do when Blondet, whom Balzac seems more than once to adopt as mask, is the narrator), in the

last glimpse of Mlle. Armande left alone with the remains of her beauty, the ruins of everything dear to her—and God.

These two stories were written at no long interval, yet, for some reason or other, Balzac did not at once unite them. *La Vieille Fille* first appeared in November and December 1836 in the *Presse,* and was inserted next year in the *Scènes de la Vie de Province.* It had three chapter divisions. The second part did not appear all at once. Its first instalment, under the general title, came out in the *Chronique de Paris* even before the *Vieille Fille* appeared in March 1836; the completion was not published (under the title of *Les Rivalités en Province*) till the autumn of 1838, when the *Constitutionnel* served as its vehicle. There were eight chapter divisions in this latter. The whole of the *Cabinet* was published in book form (with *Gambara* to follow it) in 1839. There were some changes here; and the divisions were abolished when the whole book in 1844 entered the *Comédie.* One of the greatest mistakes which, in my humble judgment, the organizers of the *édition définitive* have made, is their adoption of Balzac's never executed separation of the pair and deletion of the excellent joint-title *Les Rivalités.*

L'Interdiction belongs with the *Honorine* group in *Scènes de la Vie Privée,* being placed here for purpose of convenience. It is good in its own way. It is indeed impossible to say that there is not in the manner, though perhaps there may be none in the fact, of the Marquis d'Espard's restitution, and the rest of it, a little touch of the madder side of Quixotism; and one sees all the speculative and planning Balzac in that notable scheme of the great work on China, which brought in far, far more, I fear, than any work on

China ever has or is likely to bring in to its devisers. But the conduct of Popinot, in his interview with the Marquise, is really admirable. The great scenes of fictitious *finesse* do not always "come off;" we do not invariably find ourselves experiencing that sense of the ability of his characters which the novelist appears to entertain, and expects us to entertain likewise. But this is admirable; it is, with Charles de Bernard's *Le Gendre,* perhaps the very best thing of the kind to be found anywhere. This story would serve to show any intelligent critic that genius of no ordinary kind had passed that way.

L'Interdiction first appeared in the *Chronique de Paris* in 1836; was at first separated from the *Etudes Philosophiques* to be a *Scène de la Vie Parisienne.* G. S.

THE JEALOUSIES OF A COUNTRY TOWN

THE OLD MAID

To M. Eugène Auguste Georges Louis Midy de la Greneraye Surville, Civil Engineer of the Corps Royal, a token of affection from his brother-in-law. DE BALZAC.

PLENTY of people must have come across at least one Chevalier de Valois in the provinces; there was one in Normandy, another was extant at Bourges, a third flourished at Alençon in the year 1816, and the South very likely possessed one of its own. But we are not here concerned with the numbering of the Valois tribe. Some of them, no doubt, were about as much of Valois as Louis XIV. was a Bourbon; and every Chevalier was so slightly acquainted with the rest, that it was anything but politic to mention one of them when speaking to another. All of them, however, agreed to leave the Bourbons in perfect tranquillity on the throne of France, for it is a little too well proven that Henri IV. succeeded to the crown in default of heirs male in the Orléans, otherwise the Valois branch; so that if any Valois exist at all, they must be descendants of Charles of Valois, Duke of Angoulême, and Marie Touchet; and even there the direct line was extinct (unless proof to the contrary is forthcoming) in the person of the Abbé de Rothelin. As for the Valois Saint-Remy, descended from Henri II., they likewise came to an end with the too famous Lamothe-Valois of the Diamond Necklace affair.

Every one of the Chevaliers, if information is correct, was, like the Chevalier of Alençon, an elderly noble, tall, lean, and without fortune. The Bourges Chevalier had emigrated, the

Touraine Valois went into hiding during the Revolution, and the Alençon Chevalier was mixed up in the Vendean war, and implicated to some extent in Chouannerie. The last-named gentleman spent the most part of his youth in Paris, where, at the age of thirty, the Revolution broke in upon his career of conquests. Accepted as a true Valois by persons of the highest quality in his province, the Chevalier de Valois d'Alençon (like his namesakes) was remarkable for his fine manners, and had evidently been accustomed to move in the best society.

He dined out every day, and played cards of an evening, and, thanks to one of his weaknesses, was regarded as a great wit; he had a habit of relating a host of anecdotes of the times of Louis Quinze, and those who heard his stories for the first time thought them passably well narrated. The Chevalier de Valois, moreover, had one virtue; he refrained from repeating his own good sayings, and never alluded to his conquests, albeit his smiles and airs were delightfully indiscreet. The old gentleman took full advantage of the old-fashioned Voltairean noble's privilege of staying away from Mass, but his irreligion was very tenderly dealt with out of regard for his devotion to the Royalist cause.

One of his most remarkable graces (Molé must have learned it of him) was his way of taking snuff from an old-fashioned snuff-box with a portrait of a lady on the lid. The Princess Goritza, a lovely Hungarian, had been famous for her beauty towards the end of the reign of Louis XV.; and the Chevalier could never speak without emotion of the foreign great lady whom he loved in his youth, for whom he had fought a duel with M. de Lauzun.

But by this time the Chevalier had lived fifty-eight years, and if he owned to but fifty of them, he might safely indulge himself in that harmless deceit. Thin, fair-complexioned men, among other privileges, retain that youthfulness of shape which in men, as in women, contributes as much as anything to stave off any appearance of age. And, indeed, it is a fact that all the life, or rather, all the grace, which is the expres-

sion of life, lies in the figure. Among the Chevalier's personal traits, mention must be made of the portentous nose with which Nature had endowed him. It cut a pallid countenance sharply into two sections which seemed to have nothing to do with each other; so much so, indeed, that only one-half of his face would flush with the exertion of digestion after dinner; all the glow being confined to the left side, a phenomenon worthy of note in times when physiology is so much occupied with the human heart. M. de Valois' health was not apparently robust, judging by his long, thin legs, lean frame, and sallow complexion; but he ate like an ogre, alleging, doubtless by way of excuse for his voracity, that he suffered from a complaint known in the provinces as a "hot liver." The flush on his left cheek confirmed the story; but in a land where meals are developed on the lines of thirty or forty dishes, and last for four hours at a stretch, the Chevalier's abnormal appetite might well seem to be a special mark of the favor of Providence vouchsafed to the good town. That flush on the left cheek, according to divers medical authorities, is a sign of prodigality of heart; and, indeed, the Chevalier's past record of gallantry might seem to confirm a professional dictum for which the present chronicler (most fortunately) is in nowise responsible. But in spite of these symptoms, M. de Valois was of nervous temperament, and in consequence long-lived; and if his liver was hot, to use the old-fashioned phrase, his heart was not a whit less inflammable. If there was a line worn here and there in his face, and a silver thread or so in his hair, an experienced eye would have discerned in these signs and tokens the stigmata of desire, the furrows traced by past pleasure. And, in fact, in his face, the unmistakable marks of the crow's foot and the serpent's tooth took the shape of the delicate wrinkles so prized at the court of Cytherea.

Everything about the gallant Chevalier revealed the "ladies' man." So minutely careful was he over his ablutions, that it was a pleasure to see his cheeks; they might have been brushed over with some miraculous water. That portion of

his head which the hair refused to hide from view shone like ivory. His eyebrows, like his hair, had a youthful look, so carefully was their growth trained and regulated by the comb. A naturally fair skin seemed to be yet further whitened by some mysterious preparation; and while the Chevalier never used scent, there was about him, as it were, a perfume of youth which enhanced the freshness of his looks. His hands, that told of race, were as carefully kept as if they belonged to some coxcomb of the gentler sex; you could not help noticing those rose-pink neatly-trimmed finger-nails. Indeed, but for his lordly superlative nose, the Chevalier would have looked like a doll.

It takes some resolution to spoil this portrait with the admission of a foible; the Chevalier put cotton wool in his ears, and still continued to wear ear-rings—two tiny negroes' heads set with brilliants. They were of admirable workmanship, it is true, and their owner was so far attached to the singular appendages, that he used to justify his fancy by saying "that his sick headaches had left him since his ears were pierced." He used to suffer from sick headaches. The Chevalier is not held up as a flawless character; but even if an old bachelor's heart sends too much blood to his face, is he never therefore to be forgiven for his adorable absurdities? Perhaps (who knows?) there are sublime secrets hidden away beneath them. And besides, the Chevalier de Valois made amends for his negroes' heads with such a variety of other and different charms, that society ought to have felt itself sufficiently compensated. He really was at great pains to conceal his age and to make himself agreeable.

First and foremost, witness the extreme care which he gave to his linen, the one distinction in dress which a gentleman may permit himself in modern days. The Chevalier's linen was invariably fine and white, as befitted a noble. His coat, though remarkably neat, was always somewhat worn, but spotless and uncreased. The preservation of this garment bordered on the miraculous in the opinion of those who noticed the Chevalier's elegant indifference on this head; not

that he went so far as to scrape his clothes with broken glass (a refinement invented by the Prince of Wales), but he set himself to carry out the first principles of dress as laid down by Englishmen of the very highest and finest fashion, and this with a personal element of coxcombry which Alençon was scarcely capable of appreciating. Does the world owe no esteem to those that take such pains for it? And what was all this labor but the fulfilment of that very hardest of sayings in the Gospel, which bids us return good for evil? The freshness of the toilet, the care for dress, suited well with the Chevalier's blue eyes, ivory teeth, and bland personality; still, the superannuated Adonis had nothing masculine in his appearance, and it would seem that he employed the illusion of the toilet to hide the ravages of other than military campaigns.

To tell the whole truth, the Chevalier had a voice singularly at variance with his delicate fairness. So full was it and sonorous, that you would have been startled by the sound of it unless, with certain observers of human nature, you held the theory that the voice was only what might be expected of such a nose. With something less of volume than a giant double-bass, it was a full, pleasant baritone, reminding you of the hautboy among musical instruments, sweet and resistant, deep and rich.

M. de Valois had discarded the absurd costume still worn by a few antiquated Royalists, and frankly modernized his dress. He always appeared in a maroon coat with gilt buttons, loosely-fitting breeches with gold buckles at the knees, a white sprigged waistcoat, a tight stock, and a collarless shirt; this being a last vestige of eighteenth century costume, which its wearer was the less willing to relinquish because it enabled him to display a throat not unworthy of a lay abbé. Square gold buckles of a kind unknown to the present generation shone conspicuous upon his patent leather shoes. Two watch chains hung in view in parallel lines from a couple of fobs, another survival of an eighteenth century mode which the *incroyable* did not disdain to copy in the time of the

Directory. This costume of a transition period, reuniting two centuries, was worn by the Chevalier with the grace of an old-world marquis, a grace lost to the French stage since Molé's last pupil, Fleury, retired from the boards and took his secret with him.

The old bachelor's private life, seemingly open to all eyes, was in reality inscrutable. He lived in a modest lodging (to say the least of it) up two pairs of stairs in a house in the Rue du Cours, his landlady being the laundress most in request in Alençon—which fact explains the extreme elegance of the Chevalier's linen. Ill luck was so to order it that Alençon one day could actually believe that he had not always conducted himself as befitted a man of his quality, and that in his old age he privately married one Césarine, the mother of an infant which had the impertinence to come without being called.

"He gave his hand to her who for so long had lent her hand to iron his linen," said a certain M. du Bousquier.

The sensitive noble's last days were the more vexed by this unpleasant scandal, because, as shall be shown in the course of this present Scene, he had already lost a long-cherished hope for which he had made many a sacrifice.

Mme. Lardot's two rooms were let to M. le Chevalier de Valois at the moderate rent of a hundred francs per annum. The worthy gentleman dined out every night, and only came home to sleep; he was therefore at charges for nothing but his breakfast, which always consisted of a cup of chocolate with butter and fruit, according to the season. A fire was never lighted in his rooms except in the very coldest winters, and then only while he was dressing. Between the hours of eleven and four M. de Valois took his walks abroad, read the newspapers, and paid calls.

When the Chevalier first settled in Alençon, he magnanimously owned that he had nothing but an annuity of six hundred livres paid in quarterly instalments by his old man of business, with whom the certificates were deposited. This was all that remained of his former wealth. And every three

months, in fact, a banker in the town paid him a hundred and fifty francs remitted by one M. Bordin of Paris, the last of the *procureurs du Châtelet*. These particulars everybody knew, for the Chevalier had taken care to ask his confidant to keep the matter a profound secret. He reaped the fruits of his misfortunes. A cover was laid for him in all the best houses in Alençon; he was asked to every evening party. His talents as a card-player, a teller of anecdotes, a pleasant and well-bred man of the world, were so thoroughly appreciated that an evening was spoiled if the connoisseur of the town was not present. The host and hostess and all the ladies present missed his little approving grimace. "You are adorably well dressed," from the old bachelor's lips, was sweeter to a young woman in a ballroom than the sight of her rival's despair.

There were certain old-world expressions which no one could pronounce so well. "My heart," "my jewel," "my little love," "my queen," and all the dear diminutives of the year 1770 took an irresistible charm from M. de Valois' lips; in short, the privilege of superlatives was his. His compliments, of which, moreover, he was chary, won him the goodwill of the elderly ladies; he flattered every one down to the officials of whom he had no need.

He was so fine a gentleman at the card-table, that his behavior would have marked him out anywhere. He never complained; when his opponents lost he praised their play; he never undertook the education of his partners by showing them what they ought to have done. If a nauseating discussion of this kind began while the cards were making, the Chevalier brought out his snuff-box with a gesture worthy of Molé, looked at the Princess Goritza's portrait, took off the lid in a stately manner, heaped up a pinch, rubbed it to a fine powder between finger and thumb, blew off the light particles, shaped a little cone in his hand, and by the time the cards were dealt he had replenished the cavities in his nostrils and replaced the Princess in his waistcoat pocket—always to the left-hand side.

None but a noble of the Gracious as distinguished from the Great Century could have invented such a compromise between a disdainful silence and an epigram which would have passed over the heads of his company. The Chevalier took dull minds as he found them, and knew how to turn them to account. His irresistible evenness of temper caused many a one to say, "I admire the Chevalier de Valois!" Everything about him, his conversation and his manner, seemed in keeping with his mild appearance. He was careful to come into collision with no one, man or woman. Indulgent with deformity as with defects of intellect, he listened patiently (with the help of the Princess Goritza) to tales of the little woes of life in a country town; to anecdotes of the undercooked egg at breakfast, or the sour cream in the coffee; to small grotesque details of physical ailments; to tales of dreams and visitations and wakings with a start. The Chevalier was an exquisite listener. He had a languishing glance, a stock attitude to denote compassion; he put in his "Ohs" and "Poohs" and "What-did-you-dos?" with charming appropriateness. Till his dying day no one ever suspected that while these avalanches of nonsense lasted, the Chevalier in his own mind was rehearsing the warmest passages of an old romance, of which the Princess Goritza was the heroine. Has any one ever given a thought to the social uses of extinct sentiment?—or guessed in how many indirect ways love benefits humanity?

Possibly this listener's faculty sufficiently explains the Chevalier's popularity; he was always the spoiled child of the town, although he never quitted a drawing-room without carrying off about five livres in his pocket. Sometimes he lost, and he made the most of his losses, but it very seldom happened. All those who knew him say with one accord that never in any place have they met with so agreeable a mummy, not even in the Egyptian museum at Turin. Surely in no known country of the globe did parasite appear in such a benignant shape. Never did selfishness in its most concentrated form show itself so inoffensive, so full of good offices

He listened patiently . . . to tales of the little woes of life in a country town

as in this gentleman; the Chevalier's egoism was as good as another man's devoted friendship. If any person went to ask M. de Valois to do some trifling service which the worthy Chevalier could not perform without inconvenience, that person never went away without conceiving a great liking for him, and departed fully convinced that the Chevalier could do nothing in the matter, or might do harm if he meddled with it.

To explain this problematical existence the chronicler is bound to admit, while Truth—that ruthless debauchee—has caught him by the throat, that latterly after the three sad, glorious Days of July, Alençon discovered that M. de Valois' winnings at cards amounted to something like a hundred and fifty crowns every quarter, which amount the ingenious Chevalier intrepidly remitted to himself as an annuity, so that he might not appear to be without resources in a country with a great turn for practical details. Plenty of his friends —he was dead by that time, please to remark—plenty of his friends denied this *in toto,* they maintained that the stories were fables and slanders set in circulation by the Liberal party and that M. de Valois was an honorable and worthy gentleman. Luckily for clever gamblers, there will always be champions of this sort for them among the onlookers. Feeling ashamed to excuse wrongdoing, they stoutly deny that wrong has been done. Do not accuse them of wrong-headedness; they have their own sense of self-respect, and the Government sets them an example of the virtue which consists in burying its dead by night without chanting a *Te Deum* over a defeat. And suppose that M. de Valois permitted himself a neat stratagem that would have won Gramont's esteem, a smile from Baron de Fœneste, and a shake of the hand from the Marquis de Moncade, was he any the less the pleasant dinner guest, the wit, the unvarying card-player, the charming retailer of anecdotes, the delight of Alençon? In what, moreover, does the action, lying, as it does, outside the laws of right and wrong, offend against the elegant code of a man of birth and breeding? When so many people are

obliged to give pensions to others, what more natural than of one's own accord to allow an annuity to one's own best friend? But Laïus is dead. . . .

After some fifteen years of this kind of life, the Chevalier had amassed ten thousand and some odd hundred francs. When the Bourbons returned, he said that an old friend of his, M. le Marquis de Pombreton, late a lieutenant in the Black Musketeers, had returned a loan of twelve hundred pistoles with which he emigrated. The incident made a sensation. It was quoted afterwards as a set-off against droll stories in the *Constitutionnel* of the ways in which some *émigrés* paid their debts. The poor Chevalier used to blush all over the right side of his face whenever this noble trait in the Marquis de Pombreton came up in conversation. At the time every one rejoiced with M. de Valois; he used to consult capitalists as to the best way of investing this wreck of his former fortune; and, putting faith in the Restoration, invested it all in Government stock when the funds had fallen to fifty-six francs twenty-five centimes. MM. de Lenoncourt, de Navarreins, de Verneuil, de Fontaine, and La Billardière, to whom he was known, had obtained a pension of a hundred crowns for him from the privy purse, he said, and the Cross of St. Louis. By what means the old Chevalier obtained the two solemn confirmations of his title and quality, no one ever knew; but this much is certain, the Cross of St. Louis gave him brevet rank as a colonel on a retiring pension, by reason of his services with the Catholic army in the West.

Besides the fiction of the annuity, to which no one gave a thought, the Chevalier was now actually possessed of a genuine income of a thousand francs. But with this improvement in his circumstances he made no change in his life or manners; only—the red ribbon looked wondrous well on his maroon coat; it was a finishing touch, as it were, to this portrait of a gentleman. Ever since the year 1802 the Chevalier had sealed his letters with an ancient gold seal, engraved roughly enough, but not so badly but that the Cas-

térans, d'Esgrignons, and Troisvilles might see that he bore the arms of France impaled with his own, to wit, *France per pale, gules two bars gemelles, a cross of five mascles conjoined or, on a chief sable a cross pattee argent over all;* with a knight's casquet for crest and the motto—VALEO. With these noble arms the so-called bastard Valois was entitled to ride in all the royal coaches in the world.

Plenty of people envied the old bachelor his easy life, made up of boston, trictrac, reversis, whist, and piquet; of good play, dinners well digested, pinches of snuff gracefully taken, and quiet walks abroad. Almost all Alençon thought that his existence was empty alike of ambitions and cares; but where is the man whose life is quite as simple as they suppose who envy him?

In the remotest country village you shall find human mollusks, rotifers inanimate to all appearance, which cherish a passion for lepidoptera or conchology, and are at infinite pains to acquire some new butterfly, or a specimen of *Concha Veneris.* And the Chevalier had not merely shells and butterflies of his own, he cherished an ambitious desire with a pertinacity and profound strategy worthy of a Sixtus V. He meant to marry a rich old maid; in all probability because a wealthy marriage would be a stepping-stone to the high spheres of the Court. *This* was the secret of his royal bearing and prolonged abode in Alençon.

Very early one Tuesday morning in the middle of spring in the year '16 (to use his own expression), the Chevalier was just slipping on his dressing-gown, an old-fashioned green silk damask of a flowered pattern, when, in spite of the cotton in his ears, he heard a girl's light footstep on the stairs. In another moment some one tapped discreetly three times on the door, and then, without waiting for an answer, a very handsome damsel slipped like a snake into the old bachelor's apartment.

"Ah, Suzanne, is that you?" said the Chevalier de Valois, continuing to strop his razor. "What are you here for, dear little jewel of mischief?"

"I have come to tell you something which perhaps will give you as much pleasure as annoyance."

"Is it something about Césarine?"

"Much I trouble myself about your Césarine," pouted she, half careless, half in earnest.

The charming Suzanne, whose escapade was to exercise so great an influence on the lives of all the principal characters in this story, was one of Mme. Lardot's laundry girls. And now for a few topographical details.

The whole ground floor of the house was given up to the laundry. The little yard was a drying-ground where embroidered handkerchiefs, collarettes, muslin slips, cuffs, frilled shirts, cravats, laces, embroidered petticoats, all the fine washing of the best houses in the town, in short, hung out along the lines of hair rope. The Chevalier used to say that he was kept informed of the progress of the receiver-general's wife's flirtations by the number of slips thus brought to light; and the amount of frilled shirts and cambric cravats varied directly with the petticoats and collarettes. By this system of double entry, as it were, he detected all the assignations in the town; but the Chevalier was always discreet, he never let fall an epigram that might have closed a house to him. And yet he was a witty talker! For which reason you may be sure that M. de Valois' manners were of the finest, while his talents, as so often happens, were thrown away upon a narrow circle. Still, for he was only human after all, he sometimes could not resist the pleasure of a searching side glance which made women tremble, and nevertheless they liked him when they found out how profoundly discreet he was, how full of sympathy for their pretty frailties.

Mme. Lardot's forewoman and factotum, an alarmingly ugly spinster of five-and-forty, occupied the rest of the second floor with the Chevalier. Her door on the landing was exactly opposite his; and her apartment, like his own, consisted of two rooms, looking respectively upon the street and the yard. Above, there was nothing but the attics where the linen was dried in winter. Below lodged Mme. Lardot's

grandfather. The old man, Grévin by name, had been a privateer in his time, and had served under Admiral Simeuse in the Indies; now he was paralyzed and stone deaf. Mme. Lardot herself occupied the rooms beneath her forewoman, and so great was her weakness for people of condition, that she might be said to be blind where the Chevalier was concerned. In her eyes, M. de Valois was an absolute monarch, a king that could do no wrong; even if one of her own work-girls had been said to be guilty of finding favor in his sight, she would have said, "He is so amiable!"

And so, if M. de Valois, like most people in the provinces, lived in a glass house, it was secret as a robber's cave so far as he at least was concerned. A born confidant of the little intrigues of the laundry, he never passed the door—which almost always stood ajar—without bringing something for his pets—chocolate, bonbons, ribbons, laces, a gilt cross, and the jokes that grisettes love. Wherefore the little girls adored the Chevalier. Women can tell by instinct whether a man is attracted to anything that wears a petticoat; they know at once the kind of man who enjoys the mere sense of their presence, who never thinks of making blundering demands of repayment for his gallantry. In this respect womankind has a canine faculty; a dog in any company goes straight to the man who respects animals. The Chevalier de Valois in his poverty preserved something of his former life; he was as unable to live without some fair one under his protection as any *grand seigneur* of a bygone age. He clung to the traditions of the *petite maison*. He loved to give to women, and women alone can receive gracefully, perhaps because it is always in their power to repay.

In these days, when every lad on leaving school tries his hand at unearthing symbols or sifting legends, is it not extraordinary that no one has explained that portent, the Courtesan of the Eighteenth Century? What was she but the tournament of the Sixteenth in another shape? In 1550 the knights displayed their prowess for their ladies; in 1750 they displayed their mistresses at Longchamps; to-day they run

their horses over the course. The noble of every age has done his best to invent a life which he, and he only, can live. The painted shoes of the Fourteenth Century are the *talons rouges* of the Eighteenth; the parade of a mistress was one fashion in ostentation; the sentiment of chivalry and the knight errant was another.

The Chevalier de Valois could no longer ruin himself for a mistress, so for bonbons wrapped in bank-bills he politely offered a bag of genuine cracknels; and to the credit of Alençon, be it said, the cracknels caused far more pleasure to the recipients than M. d'Artois' presents of carriages or silver-gilt toilet sets ever gave to the fair Duthé. There was not a girl in the laundry but recognized the Chevalier's fallen greatness, and kept his familiarities in the house a profound secret.

In answer to questions, they always spoke gravely of the Chevalier de Valois; they watched over him. For others he became a venerable gentleman, his life was a flower of sanctity. But at home they would have lighted on his shoulders like paroquets.

The Chevalier liked to know the intimate aspects of family life which laundresses learn; they used to go up to his room of a morning to retail the gossip of the town; he called them his "gazettes in petticoats," his "living feuilletons." M. Sartine himself had not such intelligent spies at so cheap a rate, nor yet so loyal in their rascality. Remark, moreover, that the Chevalier thoroughly enjoyed his breakfasts.

Suzanne was one of his favorites. A clever and ambitious girl with the stuff of a Sophie Arnould in her, she was besides as beautiful as the loveliest courtesan that Titian ever prayed to pose against a background of dark velvet as a model for his *Venus*. Her forehead and all the upper part of her face about the eyes were delicately moulded; but the contours of the lower half were cast in a commoner mould. Hers was the beauty of a Normande, fresh, plump, and brilliant-complexioned, with that Rubens fleshiness which should be combined with the muscular development of a Farnese Her-

cules: This was no Venus de' Medici, the graceful feminine counterpart of Apollo.

"Well, child," said the Chevalier, "tell me your adventures little or big."

The Chevalier's fatherly benignity with these grisettes would have marked him out anywhere between Paris and Pekin. The girls put him in mind of the courtesans of another age, of the illustrious queens of opera of European fame during a good third of the eighteenth century. Certain it is that he who had lived for so long in a world of women now as dead and forgotten as the Jesuits, the buccaneers, the abbés, and the farmers-general, and all great things generally —certain it is that the Chevalier had acquired an irresistible good humor, a gracious ease, an unconcern, with no trace of egoism discernible in it. So might Jupiter have appeared to Alcmena—a king that chooses to be a woman's dupe, and flings majesty and its thunderbolts to the winds, that he may squander Olympus in follies, and "little suppers," and feminine extravagance; wishful, of all things, to be far enough away from Juno.

The room in which the Chevalier received company was bare enough, with its shabby bit of tapestry to do duty as a carpet, and very dirty, old-fashioned easy-chairs; the walls were covered with a cheap paper, on which the countenances of Louis XVI. and his family, framed in weeping willow, appeared at intervals among funeral urns, bearing the *sublime testament* by way of inscription, amid a whole host of sentimental emblems invented by Royalism under the Terror; but in spite of all this, in spite of the old flowered green silk dressing-gown, in spite of its owner's air of dilapidation, a certain fragrance of the eighteenth century clung about the Chevalier de Valois as he shaved himself before the old-fashioned toilet glass, covered with cheap lace. All the graceless graces of his youth seemed to reappear; he might have had three hundred thousand francs' worth of debts to his name, and a chariot at his door. He looked a great man, great as Berthier in the Retreat from Moscow issuing the order of the day to battalions which were no more.

"M. le Chevalier," Suzanna replied archly, "it seems to me that I have nothing to tell you—you have only to look!"

So saying, she turned and stood sidewise to prove her words by ocular demonstrations; and the Chevalier, deep old gentleman, still holding his razor across his chin, cast his right eye downwards upon the damsel, and pretended to understand.

"Very good, my little pet, we will have a little talk together presently. But you come first, it seems, to me."

"But, M. le Chevalier, am I to wait till my mother beats me and Mme. Lardot turns me away? If I do not go to Paris at once, I shall never get married here, where the men are so ridiculous."

"These things cannot be helped, child! Society changes, and women suffer just as much as the nobles from the shocking confusion which ensues. Topsy-turvydom in politics ends in topsy-turvy manners. Alas! woman soon will cease to be woman" (here he took the cotton wool out of his ears to continue his toilet). "Women will lose a great deal by plunging into sentiment; they will torture their nerves, and there will be an end of the good old ways of our time, when a little pleasure was desired without blushes, and accepted without more ado, and the vapors" (he polished the earrings with the negroes' heads)—"the vapors were only known as a means of getting one's way; before long they will take the proportions of a complaint only to be cured by an infusion of orange-blossoms." (The Chevalier burst out laughing.) "Marriage, in short," he resumed, taking a pair of tweezers to pluck out a gray hair, "marriage will come to be a very dull institution indeed, and it was so joyous in my time. The reign of Louis Quatorze and Louis Quinze, bear this in mind, my child, saw the last of the finest manners in the world."

"But, M. le Chevalier," urged the girl, "it is your little Suzanne's character and reputation that is at stake, and you are not going to forsake her, I hope!"

"What is all this?" cried the Chevalier, with a finishing touch to his hair; "I would sooner lose my name!"

"Ah!" said Suzanne.

"Listen to me, little masquerader." He sat down in a large, low chair, a *duchess,* as it used to be called, which Mme. Lardot had picked up somewhere for her lodger. Then he drew the magnificent Suzanne to him till she stood between his knees; and Suzanne submitted—Suzanne who held her head so high in the streets, and had refused a score of overtures from admirers in Alençon, not so much from self-respect as in disdain of their pettiness. Suzanne so brazenly made the most of the supposed consequences of her errors, that the old sinner, who had fathomed so many mysteries in persons far more astute than Suzanne, saw the real state of affairs at once. He knew well enough that a grisette does not laugh when disgrace is really in question, but he scorned to throw down the scaffolding of an engaging fib with a touch.

"We are slandering ourselves," said he, and there was an inimitable subtlety in his smile. "We are as well conducted as the fair one whose name we bear; we can marry without fear. But we do not want to vegetate here; we long for Paris, where charming creatures can be rich if they are clever, and we are not a fool. So we should like to find out whether the City of Pleasure has young Chevaliers de Valois in store for us, and a carriage and diamonds and an opera box. There are Russians and English and Austrians that are bringing millions to spend in Paris, and some of that money mamma settled on us as a marriage portion when she gave us our good looks. And besides, we are patriotic; we should like to help France to find her own money in these gentlemen's pockets. Eh! eh! my dear little devil's lamb, all this is not bad. The neighbors will cry out upon you a little at first perhaps, but success will make everything right. The real crime, my child, is poverty; and you and I both suffer for it. As we are not lacking in intelligence, we thought we might turn our dear little reputation to account to take in an old bachelor, but the old bachelor, sweetheart, knows the alpha and omega of woman's wiles; which is to say, that you would find it easier to put a grain of salt upon a sparrow's

tail than to persuade me to believe that I have had any share in your affair.

"Go to Paris, my child, go at the expense of a bachelor's vanity; I am not going to hinder you, I will help you, for the old bachelor, Suzanne, is the cash-box provided by nature for a young girl. But do not thrust me into the affair. Now, listen, my queen, understanding life so well as you do—you see, you might do me a good deal of harm and give me trouble; harm, because you might spoil my marriage in a place where people are so particular; trouble on your account, because you will get yourself in a scrape for nothing, a scrape entirely of your own invention, sly girl; and you know, my pet, that I have no money left, I am as poor as a church mouse. Ah! if I were to marry Mlle. Cormon, if I were rich again, I would certainly rather have you than Césarine. You were always fine gold enough to gild lead, it seemed to me; you were made to be a great lord's love; and as I knew you were a clever girl, I am not at all surprised by this trick of yours, I expected as much. For a girl, this means that you burn your boats. It is no common mind, my angel, that can do it; and for that reason you have my esteem," and he bestowed confirmation upon her cheek after the manner of a bishop, with two fingers.

"But, M. le Chevalier, I do assure you that you are mistaken, and——" she blushed, and dared not finish her sentence, at a glance he had seen through her, and read her plans from beginning to end.

"Yes, I understand, you wish me to believe you. Very well, I believe. But take my advice and go to M. du Bousquier. You have taken M. du Bousquier's linen home from the wash for five or six months, have you not?—Very good. I do not ask to know what has happened between you; but I know *him,* he is vain, he is an old bachelor, he is very rich, he has an income of two thousand five hundred livres, and spends less than eight hundred. If you are the clever girl that I take you for, you will find your way to Paris at his expense. Go to him, my pet, twist him round your

fingers, and of all things, be supple as silk, and make a double twist and a knot at every word; he is just the man to be afraid of a scandal; and if he knows that you can make him sit on the stool of repentance—— In short, you understand, threaten to apply to the ladies of the charitable fund. He is ambitious besides. Well and good, with a wife to help him there should be nothing beyond a man's reach; and are you not handsome enough and clever enough to make your husband's fortune? Why, plague take it, you might hold your own with a court lady."

The Chevalier's last words let the light into Suzanne's brain; she was burning with impatience to rush off to du Bousquier; but as she could not hurry away too abruptly, she helped the Chevalier to dress, asking questions about Paris as she did so. As for the Chevalier, he saw that his remarks had taken effect, and gave Suzanne an excuse to go, asking her to tell Césarine to bring up the chocolate that Mme. Lardot made for him every morning, and Suzanne forthwith slipped off in search of her prey.

And here follows du Bousquier's biography.—He came of an old Alençon family in a middle rank between the burghers and the country squires. On the death of his father, a magistrate in the criminal court, he was left without resource, and, like most ruined provincials, betook himself to Paris to seek his fortune. When the Revolution broke out, du Bousquier was a man of affairs; and in those days (in spite of the Republicans, who are all up in arms for the honesty of their government, the word "affairs" was used very loosely. Political spies, jobbers, and contractors, the men who arranged with the syndics of communes for the sale of the property of *émigrés*, and then bought up land at low prices to sell again,—all these folk, like ministers and generals, were men of affairs.

From 1793 to 1799 du Bousquier held contracts to supply the army with forage and provisions. During those years he lived in a splendid mansion; he was one of the great capitalists of the time; he went shares with Ouvrard; kept

open house and led the scandalous life of the times. A Cincinnatus, reaping where he had not sowed, and rich with stolen rations and sacks of corn, he kept *petites maisons* and a bevy of mistresses, and gave fine entertainments to the directors of the Republic. Citizen du Bousquier was one of Barras' intimates; he was on the best of terms with Fouché, and hand and glove with Bernadotte. He thought to be a Minister of State one day, and threw himself heart and soul into the party that secretly plotted against Bonaparte before the battle of Marengo. And but for Kellermann's charge and the death of Desaix, du Bousquier would have played a great part in the state. He was one of the upper members of the permanent staff of the promiscuous government which was driven by Napoleon's luck to vanish into the side-scenes of 1793.*

The victory unexpectedly won by stubborn fighting ended in the downfall of this party; they had placards ready printed, and were only waiting for the First Consul's defeat to proclaim a return to the principles of the Mountain.

Du Bousquier, feeling convinced that a victory was impossible, had two special messengers on the battlefield, and speculated with the larger part of his fortune for a fall in the funds. The first courier came with the news that Mélas was victorious; but the second arriving four hours afterwards, at night, brought the tidings of the Austrian defeat. Du Bousquier cursed Kellermann and Desaix; the First Consul owed him millions, he dared not curse him. But between the chance of making millions on the one hand, and stark ruin on the other, he lost his head. For several days he was half idiotic; he had undermined his constitution with excesses to such an extent that the thunderbolt left him helpless. He had something to hope from the settlement of his claims upon the Government; but in spite of bribes, he was made to feel the weight of Napoleon's displeasure against army contractors who speculated on his defeat. M. de Fermon, so pleasantly nicknamed "*Fermons la caisse*," left du Bousquier

* See *Une Ténébreuse Affaire.*

without a penny. The First Consul was even more incensed by the immorality of his private life and his connection with Barras and Bernadotte than by his speculations on the Bourse; he erased M. du Bousquier's name from the list of Receivers-general, on which a last remnant of credit had placed him for Alençon.

Of all his former wealth, nothing now remained to du Bousquier save an income of twelve hundred francs from the funds, an investment entirely due to chance, which saved him from actual want. His creditors, knowing nothing of the results of his liquidation, only left him enough in consols to bring in a thousand francs per annum; but their claims were paid in full after all, when the outstanding debts had been collected, and the Hôtel de Beauséant, du Bousquier's town house, sold besides. So, after a close shave of bankruptcy, the sometime speculator emerged with his name intact. Preceded by a tremendous reputation due to his relations with former heads of government departments, his manner of life, his brief day of authority, and final ruin through the First Consul, the man interested the city of Alençon, where Royalism was secretly predominant. Du Bousquier, exasperated against Bonaparte, with his tales of the First Consul's pettiness, of Josephine's lax morals, and a whole store of anecdotes of ten years of Revolution, seen from within, met with a good reception.

It was about this period of his life that du Bousquier, now well over his fortieth year, came out as a bachelor of thirty-six. He was of medium height, fat as became a contractor, and willing to display a pair of calves that would have done credit to a gay and gallant attorney. He had strongly marked features; a flattened nose with tufts of hair in the equine nostrils, bushy black brows, and eyes beneath them that looked out shrewd as M. de Talleyrand's own, though they had lost something of their brightness. He wore his brown hair very long, and retained the side-whiskers (*nageoires*, as they were called) of the time of the Republic. You had only to look at his fingers, tufted at every joint, or at

the blue knotted veins that stood out upon his hands, to see the unmistakable signs of a very remarkable muscular development; and, in truth, he had the chest of the Farnese Hercules, and shoulders fit to bear the burden of the national debt; you never see such shoulders nowadays. His was a luxuriant virility admirably described by an eighteenth century phrase which is scarcely intelligible to-day; the gallantry of a bygone age would have summed up du Bousquier as a "payer of arrears"—*un vrai payeur d'arrérages.*

Yet, as in the case of the Chevalier de Valois, there were sundry indications at variance with the ex-contractor's general appearance. His vocal powers, for instance, were not in keeping with his muscles; not that it was the mere thread of a voice which sometimes issues from the throats of such two-footed seals; on the contrary, it was loud but husky, something like the sound of a saw cutting through damp, soft wood; it was, in fact, the voice of a speculator brought to grief. For a long while du Bousquier wore the costume in vogue in the days of his glory: the boots with turned-down tops, the while silk stockings, the short cloth breeches, ribbed with cinnamon color, the blue coat, the waistcoat *à la* Robespierre.

His hatred of the First Consul should have been a sort of passport into the best Royalist houses of Alençon; but the seven or eight families that made up the local Faubourg Saint-Germain into which the Chevalier de Valois had the entrance, held aloof. Almost from the first, du Bousquier had aspired to marry one Mlle. Armande, whose brother was one of the most esteemed nobles of the town; he thought to make this brother play a great part in his own schemes, for he was dreaming of a brilliant return match in politics. He met with a refusal, for which he consoled himself with such compensation as he might find among some half-score of retired manufacturers of *Point d'Alençon,* owners of grass lands or cattle, or wholesale linen merchants, thinking that among these chance might put a good match in his way. Indeed, the old bachelor had centered all his hopes on a pros-

pective fortunate marriage, which a man, eligible in so many ways, might fairly expect to make. For he was not without a certain financial acumen, of which not a few availed themselves. He pointed out business speculations as a ruined gambler gives hints to new hands; and he was expert at discovering the resources, chances, and management of a concern. People looked upon him as a good administrator. It was an often-discussed question whether he should not be mayor of Alençon, but the recollection of his Republican jobberies spoiled his chances, and he was never received at the prefecture.

Every successive government, even the government of the Hundred Days, declined to give him the coveted appointment, which would have assured his marriage with an elderly spinster whom he now had in his mind. It was his detestation of the Imperial Government that drove him into the Royalist camp, where he stayed in spite of insults there received; but when the Bourbons returned, and still he was excluded from the prefecture, that final rebuff filled him with a hatred deep as the profound secrecy in which he wrapped it. Outwardly, he remained patiently faithful to his opinions; secretly, he became the leader of the Liberal party in Alençon, the invisible controller of elections; and, by his cunningly devised manœuvres and underhand methods, he worked no little harm to the restored Monarchy.

When a man is reduced to live through his intellect alone, his hatred is something as quiet as a little stream; insignificant to all appearance, but unfailing. This was the case with du Bousquier. His hatred was like a negro's, so placid, so patient, that it deceives the enemy. For fifteen years he brooded over a revenge which no victory, not even the Three Days of July 1830, could sate.

When the Chevalier sent Suzanne to du Bousquier, he had his own reasons for so doing. The Liberal and the Royalist divined each other, in spite of the skilful dissimulation which hid their common aim from the rest of the town.

The two old bachelors were rivals. Both of them had

planned to marry the Demoiselle Cormon, whose name came up in the course of the Chevalier's conversation with Suzanne. Both of them, engrossed by their idea, and masquerading in indifference, were waiting for the moment when some chance should deliver the old maid to one or other of them. And the fact that they were rivals in this way would have been enough to make enemies of the pair even if each had not been the living embodiment of a political system.

Men take their color from their time. This pair of rivals is a case in point; the historic tinge of their characters stood out in strong contrast in their talk, their ideas, their costume. The one, blunt and energetic, with his burly abrupt ways, curt speech, dark looks, dark hair, and dark complexion, alarming in appearance, but impotent in reality as insurrection, was the Republic personified; the other, bland and polished, elegant and fastidious, gaining his ends slowly but surely by diplomacy, and never unmindful of good taste, was the typical old-world courtier. They met on the same ground almost every evening. It was a rivalry always courteous and urbane on the part of the Chevalier, less ceremonious on du Bousquier's, though he kept within the limits prescribed by Alençon, for he had no wish to be driven ignominiously from the field. The two men understood each other well; but no one else saw what was going on. In spite of the minute and curious interest which provincials take in the small details of which their lives are made up, no one so much as suspected that the two men were rivals.

M. le Chevalier's position was somewhat the stronger; he had never proposed for Mlle. Cormon, whereas du Bousquier had declared himself after a rebuff from one of the noblest families, and had met with a second refusal. Still, the Chevalier thought so well of his rival's chances, that he considered it worth while to deal him a *coup de Jarnac,* a treacherous thrust from a weapon as finely tempered as Suzanne. He had fathomed du Bousquier; and, as will shortly be seen, he was not mistaken in any of his conjectures.

Suzanne tripped away down the Rue du Cours, along the Rue de la Porte de Séez and the Rue du Bercail to the Rue du Cygne, where du Bousquier, five years ago, had bought a small countrified house built of the gray stone of the district, which is used like granite in Normandy, or Breton schist in the West. The sometime forage-contractor had established himself there in more comfort than any other house in the town could boast, for he had brought with him some relics of past days of splendor; but provincial manners and customs were slowly darkening the glory of the fallen Sardanapalus. The vestiges of past luxury looked about as much out of place in the house as a chandelier in a barn. Harmony, which links the works of man or of God together, was lacking in all things large or small. A ewer with a metal lid, such as you only see on the outskirts of Brittany, stood on a handsome chest of drawers; and while the bedroom floor was covered with a fine carpet, the window-curtains displayed a flower pattern only known to cheap printed cottons. The stone mantelpiece, daubed over with paint, was out of all keeping with a handsome clock disgraced by a shabby pair of candlesticks. Local talent had made an unsuccessful attempt to paint the doors in vivid contrasts of startling colors; while the staircase, ascended by all and sundry in muddy boots, had not been painted at all. In short, du Bousquier's house, like the time which he represented, was a confused mixture of grandeur and squalor.

Du Bousquier was regarded as well-to-do, but he led the parasitical life of the Chevalier de Valois, and he is always rich enough that spends less than his income. His one servant was a country bumpkin, a dull-witted youth enough; but he had been trained, by slow degrees, to suit du Bousquier's requirements, until he had learned, much as an ourang-outang might learn, to scour floors, black boots, brush clothes, and to come for his master of an evening with a lantern if it was dark, and a pair of sabots if it rained. On great occasions, du Bousquier made him discard the blue-checked cotton blouse with loose sagging pockets behind, which always bulged with

a handkerchief, a clasp knife, apples, or "stickjaw." Arrayed in a regulation suit of clothes, he accompanied his master to wait at table, and over-ate himself afterwards with the other servants. Like many other mortals, René had only stuff enough in him for one vice, and his was gluttony. Du Bousquier made a reward of this service, and in return his Breton factotum was absolutely discreet.

"What, have you come our way, miss?" René asked when he saw Suzanne in the doorway. "It is not your day; we have not got any linen for Mme. Lardot."

"Big stupid!" laughed the fair Suzanne, as she went up the stairs, leaving René to finish a porringer full of buckwheat bannocks boiled in milk.

Du Bousquier was still in bed, ruminating his plans for fortune. To him, as to all who have squeezed the orange of pleasure, there was nothing left but ambition. Ambition, like gambling, is inexhaustible. And, moreover, given a good constitution, the passions of the brain will always outlive the heart's passions.

"Here I am!" said Suzanne, sitting down on the bed; the curtain-rings grated along the rods as she swept them sharply back with an imperious gesture.

"*Quésaco,* my charmer?" asked du Bousquier, sitting upright.

"Monsieur," Suzanne began, with much gravity, "you must be surprised to see me come in this way; but, under the circumstances, it is no use my minding what people will say."

"What is all this about?" asked du Bousquier, folding his arms.

"Why, do you not understand?" returned Suzanne. "I know" (with an engaging little pout), "I know how ridiculous it is when a poor girl comes to bother a man about things that you think mere trifles. But if you really knew me, monsieur, if you only knew all that I would do for a man, if he cared about me as I could care about you, you would never repent of marrying me. It is not that I could be of so much use to you *here,* by the way; but if we went to Paris, you should see

how far I could bring a man of spirit with such brains as yours, and especially just now, when they are re-making the Government from top to bottom, and the foreigners are the masters. Between ourselves, does this thing in question really matter after all? Is it not a piece of good fortune for which you would be glad to pay a good deal one of these days? For whom are you going to think and work?"

"For myself, to be sure!" du Bousquier answered brutally.

"Old monster! you shall never be a father!" said Suzanne, with a ring in her voice which turned the words to a prophecy and a curse.

"Come, Suzanne, no nonsense; I am dreaming still, I think."

"What more do you want in the way of reality?" cried Suzanne, rising to her feet. Du Bousquier scrubbed his head with his cotton nightcap, which he twisted round and round with a fidgety energy that told plainly of prodigious mental ferment.

"He actually believes it!" Suzanne said within herself. "And his vanity is tickled. Good Lord, how easy it is to take them in!"

"Suzanne! What the deuce do you want me to do? It is so extraordinary . . . I that thought—— The fact is. . . . But no, no, it can't be——"

"Do you mean that you cannot marry me?"

"Oh, as to that, no. I am not free."

"Is it Mlle. Armande or Mlle. Cormon, who have both refused you already? Look here, M. du Bousquier, it is not as if I was obliged to get gendarmes to drag you to the registrar's office to save my character. There are plenty that would marry me, but I have no intention whatever of taking a man that does not know my value. You may be sorry some of these days that you behaved like this; for if you will not take your chance to-day, not for gold, nor silver, nor anything in this world will I give it you again."

"But, Suzanne—are you sure——?"

"Sir, for what do you take me?" asked the girl, draping

herself in her virtue. "I am not going to put you in mind of the promises you made, promises that have been the ruin of a poor girl, when all her fault was that she looked too high and loved too much."

But joy, suspicion, self-interest, and a host of contending emotions had taken possession of du Bousquier. For a long time past he had made up his mind that he would marry Mlle. Cormon; for after long ruminations over the Charter, he saw that it opened up magnificent prospects to his ambition through the channels of a representative government. His marriage with that mature spinster would raise his social position very much; he would acquire great influence in Alençon. And here this wily Suzanne had conjured up a storm, which put him in a most awkward dilemma. But for that private hope of his, he would have married Suzanne out of hand, and put himself openly at the head of the Liberal party in the town. Such a marriage meant the final renunciation of the best society, and a drop into the ranks of the wealthy tradesmen, shopkeepers, rich manufacturers, and graziers who, beyond a doubt, would carry him as their candidate in triumph. Already du Bousquier caught a glimpse of the Opposition benches. He did not attempt to hide his solemn deliberations; he rubbed his hand over his head, made a wisp of the cotton nightcap, and a damaging confession of the nudity beneath it. As for Suzanne, after the wont of those who succeed beyond their utmost hopes, she sat dumfounded. To hide her amazement at his behavior, she drooped like a hapless victim before her seducer, while within herself she laughed like a grisette on a frolic.

"My dear child, I will have nothing to do with hanky-panky of this sort."

This brief formula was the result of his cogitations. The ex-contractor to the Government prided himself upon belonging to that particular school of cynic philosophers which declines to be "taken in" by women, and includes the whole sex in one category as suspicious characters. Strong-minded men of this stamp, weaklings are they for the most part, have

a catechism of their own in the matter of womankind. Every woman, according to them, from the Queen of France to the milliner, is at heart a rake, a hussy, a dangerous creature, not to say a bit of a rascal, a liar in grain, a being incapable of a serious thought. For du Bousquier and his like, woman is a maleficent *bayadère* that must be left to dance, and sing, and laugh. They see nothing holy, nothing great in woman; for them she represents, not the poetry of the senses, but gross sensuality. They are like gluttons who should mistake the kitchen for the dining-room. On this showing, a man must be a consistent tyrant, unless he means to be enslaved. And in this respect, again, du Bousquier and the Chevalier de Valois stood at opposite poles.

As he delivered himself of the above remark, he flung his nightcap to the foot of the bed, much as Gregory the Great might have flung down the candle while he launched the thunders of an excommunication; and Suzanne learned that the old bachelor wore a false front.

"Bear in mind, M. du Bousquier, that by coming here I have done my duty," she remarked majestically. "Remember that I was bound to offer you my hand and to ask for yours; but, at the same time, remember that I have behaved with the dignity of a self-respecting woman; I did not lower myself so far as to cry like a fool; I did not insist; I have not worried you at all. Now you know my position. You know that I cannot stay in Alençon. If I do, my mother will beat me; and Mme. Lardot is as high and mighty over principles as if she washed and ironed with them. She will turn me away. And where am I to go, poor work-girl that I am? To the hospital? Am I to beg for bread? Not I. I would sooner fling myself into the Brillante or the Sarthe. Now, would it not be simpler for me to go to Paris? Mother might find some excuse for sending me, an uncle wants me to come, or an aunt is going to die, or some lady takes an interest in me. It is just a question of money for the traveling expenses and —you know what——"

This news was immeasurably more important to du Bous-

quier than to the Chevalier de Valois, for reasons which no one knew as yet but the two rivals, though they will appear in the course of the story. At this point, suffice it to say that Suzanne's fib had thrown the sometime forage-contractor's ideas into such confusion that he was incapable of thinking seriously. But for that bewilderment, but for the secret joy in his heart (for a man's own vanity is a swindler that never lacks a dupe), it must have struck him that any honest girl, with a heart still unspoiled, would have died a hundred deaths rather than enter upon such a discussion, or make a demand for money. He must have seen the look in the girl's eyes, seen the gambler's ruthless meanness that would take a life to gain money for a stake.

"Would you really go to Paris?" he asked.

The words brought a twinkle to Suzanne's gray eyes, but it was lost upon du Bousquier's self-satisfaction.

"I would indeed, sir."

But at this du Bousquier broke out into a singular lament. He had just paid the balance of the purchase-money for his house; and there was the painter, and the glazier, and the bricklayer, and the carpenter. Suzanne let him talk; she was waiting for the figures. Du Bousquier at last proposed three hundred francs, and at this Suzanne got up as if to go.

"Eh, what! Where are you going?" du Bousquier cried uneasily.—"A fine thing to be a bachelor," he said to himself. "I'll be hanged if I remember doing more than rumple the girl's collar; and hey presto! on the strength of a joke she takes upon herself to draw a bill upon you, point-blank!"

Suzanne meanwhile began to cry. "Monsieur," she said, "I am going to Mme. Granson, the treasurer of the Maternity Fund; she pulled one poor girl in the same straits out of the water (as you may say) to my knowledge."

"Mme. Granson?"

"Yes. She is related to Mlle. Cormon, the lady patroness of the society. Asking your pardon, some ladies in the town have started a society that will keep many a poor creature

from making away with her child, like that pretty Faustine of Argentan did; and paid for it with her life at Mortagne just three years ago."

"Here, Suzanne," returned du Bousquier, holding out a key, "open the desk yourself. There is a bag that has been opened, with six hundred francs still left in it. It is all I have."

Du Bousquier's chopfallen expression plainly showed how little goodwill went with his compliance.

"An old thief!" said Suzanne to herself. "I will tell tales about his false hair!" Mentally she compared him with that delightful old Chevalier de Valois; he had given her nothing, but he understood her, he had advised her, he had the welfare of his grisettes at heart.

"If you are deceiving me, Suzanne," exclaimed the object of this unflattering comparison, as he watched her hand in the drawer, "you shall——"

"So, monsieur, you would not give me the money if I asked you for it?" interrupted she with queenly insolence.

Once recalled to the ground of gallantry, recollections of his prime came back to the ex-contractor. He grunted assent. Suzanne took the bag and departed, first submitting her forehead to a kiss which he gave, but in a manner which seemed to say, "This is an expensive privilege; but it is better than being brow-beaten by counsel in a court of law as the seducer of a young woman accused of child murder."

Suzanne slipped the bag into a pouch-shaped basket on her arm, execrating du Bousquier's stinginess as she did so, for she wanted a thousand francs. If a girl is once possessed by a desire, and has taken the first step in trickery and deceit, she will go to great lengths. As the fair clear-starcher took her way along the Rue du Bercail, it suddenly occurred to her that the Maternity Fund under Mlle. Cormon's presidency would probably make up the sum which she regarded as sufficient for a start, a very large amount in the eyes of an Alençon grisette. And besides, she hated du Bousquier, and du Bousquier seemed frightened when she talked of confess-

ing her so-called strait to Mme. Granson. Wherefore Suzanne determined that whether or no she made a farthing out of the Maternity Fund, she would entangle du Bousquier in the inextricable undergrowth of the gossip of a country town. There is something of a monkey's love of mischief in every grisette. Suzanne composed her countenance dolorously and betook herself accordingly to Mme. Granson.

Mme. Granson was the widow of a lieutenant-colonel of artillery who fell at Jena. Her whole yearly income consisted of a pension of nine hundred francs for her lifetime, and her one possession besides was a son whose education and maintenance had absorbed every penny of her savings. She lived in the Rue du Bercail, in one of the cheerless ground-floor apartments through which you can see from back to front at a glance as you walk down the main street of any little town. Three steps, rising pyramid fashion, brought you to the level of the house door, which opened upon a passage-way and a little yard beyond, with a wooden-roofed staircase at the further end. Mme. Granson's kitchen and dining-room occupied the space on one side of the passage, on the other side a single room did duty for a variety of purposes, for the widow's bedroom among others. Her son, a young man of three-and-twenty, slept upstairs in an attic above the first floor. Athanase Granson contributed six hundred francs to the poor mother's housekeeping. He was distantly related to Mlle. Cormon, whose influence had obtained him a little post in the registrar's office, where he was employed in making out certificates of births, marriages, and deaths.

After this, any one can see the little chilly yellow-curtained parlor, the furniture covered with yellow Utrecht velvet, and Mme. Granson going round the room, after her visitors had left, to straighten the little straw mats put down in front of each chair, so as to save the waxed and polished red brick floor from contact with dirty boots; and, this being accomplished, returning to her place beside her work-table under the portrait of her lieutenant-general. The becushioned armchair, in which she sat at her sewing, was always drawn

up between the two windows, so that she could look up and down the Rue du Bercail and see every one that passed. She was a good sort of woman, dressed with a homely simplicity in keeping with a pale face, beaten thin, as it were, by many cares. You felt the stern soberness of poverty in every little detail in that house, just as you breathed a moral atmosphere of austerity and upright provincial ways.

Mother and son at this moment were sitting together in the dining-room over their breakfast—a cup of coffee, bread and butter and radishes. And here, if the reader is to understand how gladly Mme. Granson heard Suzanne, some explanation of the secret hopes of the household must be given.

Athanase Granson was a thin, hollow-cheeked young man of medium height, with a white face in which a pair of dark eyes, bright with thought, looked like two marks made with charcoal. The somewhat worn contours of that face, the curving line of the lips, a sharply turned-up chin, a regularly cut marble forehead, a melancholy expression caused by the consciousness of power on the one hand and of poverty on the other,—all these signs and characteristics told of imprisoned genius. So much so indeed, that anywhere but at Alençon his face would have won help for him from distinguished men, or from the women that can discern genius *incognito*. For if this was not genius, at least it was the outward form that genius takes; and if the strength of a high heart was wanting, it looked out surely from those eyes. And yet, while Athanase could find expression for the loftiest feeling, an outer husk of shyness spoiled everything in him, down to the very charm of youth, just as the frost of penury disheartened every effort. Shut in by the narrow circle of provincial life, without approbation, encouragement, or any way of escape, the thought within him was dying out before its dawn. And Athanase besides had the fierce pride which poverty intensifies in certain natures, the kind of pride by which a man grows great in the stress of battle with men and circumstances, while at the outset it only handicaps him.

Genius manifests itself in two ways—either by taking its

own as soon as he finds it, like a Napoleon or a Molière, or by patiently revealing itself and waiting for recognition. Young Granson belonged to the latter class. He was easily discouraged, ignorant of his value. His turn of mind was contemplative, he lived in thought rather than in action, and possibly, to those who cannot imagine genius without the Frenchman's spark of enthusiasm, he might have seemed incomplete. But Athanase's power lay in the world of thought. He was to pass through successive phases of emotion, hidden from ordinary eyes, to one of those sudden resolves which bring the chapter to a close and set fools declaring that "the man is mad." The world's contempt for poverty was sapping the life in Athanase. The bow, continually strung tighter and tighter, was slackened by the enervating close air of a solitude with never a breath of fresh air in it. He was giving way under the strain of a cruel and fruitless struggle. Athanase had that in him which might have placed his name among the foremost names of France; he had known what it was to gaze with glowing eyes over Alpine heights and fields of air whither unfettered genius soars, and now he was pining to death like some caged and starved eagle.

While he had worked on unnoticed in the town library, he buried his dreams of fame in his own soul lest they should injure his prospects; and he carried besides another secret hidden even more deeply in his heart, the secret love which hollowed his cheeks and sallowed his forehead.

Athanase loved his distant cousin, that Mlle. Cormon, for whom his unconscious rivals du Bousquier and the Chevalier de Valois were lying in ambush. It was a love born of self-interest. Mlle. Cormon was supposed to be one of the richest people in the town; and he, poor boy, had been drawn to love her partly through the desire for material welfare, partly through a wish formed times without number to gild his mother's declining years; and partly also through cravings for the physical comfort necessary to men who live an intellectual life. In his own eyes, his love was dishonored by its very

natural origin; and he was afraid of the ridicule which people pour on the love of a young man of three-and-twenty for a woman of forty. And yet his love was quite sincere. Much that happens in the provinces would be improbable upon the face of it anywhere else, especially in matters of this kind.

But in a country town there are no unforeseen contingencies; there is no coming and going, no mystery, no such thing as chance. Marriage is a necessity, and no family will accept a man of dissolute life. A connection between a young fellow like Athanase and a handsome girl might seem a natural thing enough in a great city; in a country town it would be enough to ruin a young man's chances of marriage, especially if he were poor; for when the prospective bridegroom is wealthy an awkward business of this sort may be smoothed over. Between the degradation of certain courses and a sincere love, a man that is not heartless can make but one choice if he happens to be poor; he will prefer the disadvantages of virtue to the disadvantages of vice. But in a country town the number of women with whom a young man can fall in love is strictly limited. A pretty girl with a fortune is beyond his reach in a place where every one's income is known to a farthing. A penniless beauty is equally out of the question. To take her for a wife would be "to marry hunger and thirst," as the provincial saying goes. Finally, celibacy has its dangers in youth. These reflections explain how it has come to pass that marriage is the very basis of provincial life.

Men in whom genius is hot and unquenchable, who are forced to take their stand on the independence of poverty, ought to leave these cold regions; in the provinces thought meets with the persecution of brutal indifference, and no woman cares or dares to play the part of a sister of charity to the worker, the lover of art or sciences.

Who can rightly understand Athanase's love for Mlle. Cormon? Not the rich, the sultans of society, who can find seraglios at their pleasure; not respectability, keeping to the track beaten hard by prejudice; nor yet those women who shut

their eyes to the cravings of the artist temperament, and, taking it for granted that both sexes are governed by the same laws, insist upon a system of reciprocity in their particular virtues. The appeal must, perhaps, be made to young men who suffer from the repression of young desires just as they are putting forth their full strength; to the artist whose genius is stilled within him by poverty till it becomes a disease; to power at first unsupported, persecuted, and too often unfriended till it emerges at length triumphant from the twofold agony of soul and body.

These will know the throbbing pangs of the cancer which was gnawing Athanase. Such as these have raised long, cruel debates within themselves, with the so high end in sight and no means of attaining to it. They have passed through the experience of abortive effort; they have left the spawn of genius on the barren sands. They know that the strength of desire is as the scope of the imagination; the higher the leap, the lower the fall; and how many restraints are broken in such falls! These, like Athanase, catch glimpses of a glorious future in the distance; all that lies between seems but a transparent film of gauze to their piercing sight; but of that film which scarcely obscures the vision, society makes a wall of brass. Urged on by their vocation, by the artist's instinct within them, they too seek times without number to make a stepping-stone of sentiments which society turns in the same way to practical ends. What! when marriages in the provinces are calculated and arranged on every side with a view to securing material welfare, shall it be forbidden to a struggling artist or man of science to keep two ends in view, to try to ensure his own subsistence that the thought within him may live?

Athanase Granson, with such ideas as these fermenting in his head, thought at first of marriage with Mlle. Cormon as a definite solution of the problem of existence. He would be free to work for fame, he could make his mother comfortable, and he felt sure of himself—he knew that he could be faithful to Mlle. Cormon. But soon his purpose bred a real passion

in him. It was an unconscious process. He set himself to study Mlle. Cormon; then familiarity exercised its spell, and at length Athanase saw nothing but beauties—the defects were all forgotten.

The senses count for so much in the love of a young man of three-and-twenty. Through the heat of desire woman is seen as through a prism. From this point of view it was a touch of genius in Beaumarchais to make the page Cherubino in the play strain Marcellina to his heart. If you recollect, moreover, that poverty restricted Athanase to a life of great loneliness, that there was no other woman to look at, that his eyes were always fastened upon Mlle. Cormon, and that all the light in the picture was concentrated upon her, it seems natural, does it not, that he should love her? The feeling hidden in the depths of his heart could but grow stronger day by day. Desire and pain and hope and meditation, in silence and repose, were filling up Athanase's soul to the brim; every hour added its drop. As his senses came to the aid of imagination and widened the inner horizon, Mlle. Cormon became more and more awe-inspiring, and he grew more and more timid.

The mother had guessed it all. She was a provincial, and she frankly calculated the advantages of the match. Mlle. Cormon might think herself very lucky to marry a young man of twenty-three with plenty of brains, a likely man to do honor to his name and country. Still the obstacles, Athanase's poverty and Mlle. Cormon's age, seemed to her to be insurmountable; there was nothing for it that she could see but patience. She had a policy of her own, like du Bousquier and the Chevalier de Valois: she was on the lookout for her opportunity, waiting, with wits sharpened by self-interest and a mother's love, for the propitious moment.

Of the Chevalier de Valois, Mme. Granson had no suspicion whatsoever; du Bousquier she still credited with views upon the lady, albeit Mlle. Cormon had once refused him. An adroit and secret enemy, Mme. Granson did the ex-contractor untold harm to serve the son to whom she had not spoken a

word. After this, who does not see the importance of Suzanne's lie once confided to Mme. Granson? What a weapon put into the hands of the charitable treasurer of the Maternity Fund! How demurely she would carry the tale from house to house when she asked for subscriptions for the chaste Suzanne!

At this particular moment Athanase was pensively sitting with his elbow on the table, balancing a spoon on the edge of the empty bowl before him. He looked with unseeing eyes round the poor room, over the walls covered with an old-fashioned paper only seen in wine-shops, at the window-curtains with a chessboard pattern of pink-and-white squares, at the red-brick floor, the straw-bottomed chairs, the painted wooden sideboard, the glass door that opened into the kitchen. As he sat facing his mother and with his back to the fire, and as the fireplace was almost opposite the door, the first thing which caught Suzanne's eyes was his pale face, with the light from the street window falling full upon it, a face framed in dark hair, and eyes with the gleam of despair in them, and a fever kindled by the morning's thoughts.

The grisette surely knows by instinct the pain and sorrow of love; at the sight of Athanase, she felt that sudden electric thrill which comes we know not whence. We cannot explain it; some strong-minded persons deny that it exists, but many a woman and many a man has felt that shock of sympathy. It is a flash, lighting up the darkness of the future, and at the same time a presentiment of the pure joy of love shared by two souls, and a certainty that this other too understands. It is more like the strong, sure touch of a master hand upon the clavier of the senses than anything else. Eyes are riveted by an irresistible fascination, hearts are troubled, the music of joy rings in the ears and thrills the soul; a voice cries, "It is he!" And then—then very likely, reflection throws a douche of cold water over all this turbulent emotion, and there is an end of it.

In a moment, swift as a clap of thunder, a broadside of new thoughts poured in upon Suzanne. A lightning flash of

love burned the weeds which had sprung up in dissipation and wantonness. She saw all that she was losing by blighting her name with a lie, the desecration, the degradation of it. Only last evening this idea had been a joke, now it was like a heavy sentence passed upon her. She recoiled before her success. But, after all, it was quite impossible that anything should come of this meeting; and the thought of Athanase's poverty, and a vague hope of making money and coming back from Paris with both hands full, to say, "I loved you all along" —or fate, if you will have it so—dried up the beneficent dew. The ambitious damsel asked shyly to speak for a moment with Mme. Granson, who took her into her bedroom.

When Suzanne came out again she looked once more at Athanase. He was still sitting in the same attitude. She choked back her tears.

As for Mme. Granson, she was radiant. She had found a terrible weapon to use against du Bousquier at last; she could deal him a deadly blow. So she promised the poor victim of seduction the support of all the ladies who subscribed to the Maternity Fund. She foresaw a dozen calls in prospect. In the course of the morning and afternoon she would conjure down a terrific storm upon the elderly bachelor's head. The Chevalier de Valois certainly foresaw the turn that matters were likely to take, but he had not expected anything like the amount of scandal that came of it.

"We are going to dine with Mlle. Cormon, you know, dear boy," said Mme. Granson; "take rather more pains with your appearance. It is a mistake to neglect your dress as you do; you look so untidy. Put on your best frilled shirt and your green cloth coat. I have my reasons," she added, with a mysterious air. "And besides, there will be a great many people; Mlle. Cormon is going to the Prébaudet directly. If a young man is thinking of marrying, he ought to make himself agreeable in every possible way. If girls would only tell the truth, my boy, dear me! you would be surprised at the things that take their fancy. It is often quite enough if a young man rides by at the head of a company of artillery, or

comes to a dance in a suit of clothes that fits him passably well. A certain way of carrying the head, a melancholy attitude, is enough to set a girl imagining a whole life; we invent a romance to suit the hero; often he is only a stupid young man, but the marriage is made. Take notice of M. de Valois, study him, copy his manners; see how he looks at ease; he has not a constrained manner, as you have. And talk a little; any one might think that you knew nothing at all, *you* that know Hebrew by heart."

Athanase heard her submissively, but he looked surprised. He rose, took his cap, and went back to his work.

"Can mother have guessed my secret?" he thought, as he went round by the Rue du Val-Noble where Mlle. Cormon lived, a little pleasure in which he indulged of a morning. His head was swarming with romantic fancies.

"How little she thinks that going past her house at this moment is a young man who would love her dearly, and be true to her, and never cause her a single care, and leave her fortune entirely in her own hands! Oh me! what a strange fatality it is that we two should live as we do in the same town and within a few paces of each other, and yet nothing can bring us any nearer! How if I spoke to her to-night?"

Meanwhile Suzanne went home to her mother, thinking the while of poor Athanase, feeling that for him she could find it in her heart to do what many a woman must have longed to do for the one beloved with superhuman strength; she could have made a stepping-stone of her beautiful body if so he might come to his kingdom the sooner.

And now we must enter the house where all the actors in this Scene (Suzanne excepted) were to meet that very evening, the house belonging to the old maid, the converging point of so many interests. As for Suzanne, that young woman with her well-grown beauty, with courage sufficient to burn her boats, like Alexander, and to begin the battle of life with an uncalled-for sacrifice of her character, she now disappears from the stage after bringing about a violently excit-

ing situation. Her wishes, moreover, were more than fulfilled. A few days afterwards she left her native place with a stock of money and fine clothes, including a superb green rep gown and a green bonnet lined with rose color, M. de Valois' gifts, which Suzanne liked better than anything else, better even than the Maternity Society's money. If the Chevalier had gone to Paris while Suzanne was in her hey-day, she would assuredly have left all for him.

And so this chaste Susanna, of whom the elders scarcely had more than a glimpse, settled herself comfortably and hopefully in Paris, while all Alençon was deploring the misfortunes with which the ladies of the Charitable and Maternity Societies had manifested so lively a sympathy.

While Suzanne might be taken as a type of the handsome Norman virgins who furnish, on the showing of a learned physician, one-third of the supply devoured by the monster, Paris, she entered herself, and remained in those higher branches of her profession in which some regard is paid to appearances. In an age in which, as M. de Valois said, "woman has ceased to be woman," she was known merely as Mme. du Val-Noble; in other times she would have rivaled an Imperia, a Rhodope, a Ninon. One of the most distinguished writers of the Restoration took her under his protection, and very likely will marry her some day; he is a journalist, and above public opinion, seeing that he creates a new one every six years.

In almost every prefecture of the second magnitude there is some salon frequented not exactly by the cream of the local society, but by personages both considerable and well considered. The host and hostess probably will be among the foremost people in the town. To them all houses are open; no entertainment, no public dinner is given, but they are asked to it; but in their salon you will not meet the *gens à château*—lords of the manor, peers of France living on their broad acres, and persons of the highest quality in the department, though these are all on visiting terms with the family, and exchange invitations to dinners and evening parties. The

mixed society to be found there usually consists of the lesser noblesse resident in the town, with the clergy and judicial authorities. It is an influential assemblage. All the wit and sense of the district is concentrated in its solid, unpretentious ranks. Everybody in the set knows the exact amount of his neighbor's income, and professes the utmost indifference to dress and luxury, trifles held to be mere childish vanity compared with the acquisition of a *mouchoir à bœufs*—a pocket-handkerchief of some ten or a dozen acres, purchased after as many years of pondering and intriguing and a prodigious deal of diplomacy.

Unshaken in its prejudices whether good or ill, the coterie goes on its way without a look before or behind. Nothing from Paris is allowed to pass without a prolonged scrutiny; innovations are ridiculous, and consols and cashmere shawls alike objectionable. Provincials read nothing and wish to learn nothing; for them, science, literature, and mechanical invention are as the thing that is not. If a prefect does not suit their notions, they do their best to have him removed; if this cannot be done, they isolate him. So will you see the inmates of a beehive wall up an intruding snail with wax. Finally, of the gossip of the salon, history is made. Young married women put in an appearance there occasionally (though the card-table is the one resource) that their conduct may be stamped with the approval of the coterie and their social status confirmed.

Native susceptibilities are sometimes wounded by the supremacy of a single house, but the rest comfort themselves with the thought that they save the expense entailed by the position. Sometimes it happens that no one can afford to keep open house, and then the bigwigs of the place look about them for some harmless person whose character, position, and social standing offer guarantees for the neutrality of the ground, and alarm nobody's vanity or self-interest. This had been the case at Alençon. For a long time past the best society of the town has been wont to assemble in the house of the old maid before mentioned, who little suspected Mme. Granson's de-

signs on her fortune, or the secret hopes of the two elderly bachelors who have just been unmasked.

Mlle. Cormon was Mme. Granson's fourth cousin. She lived with her mother's brother, a sometime vicar-general of the bishopric of Séez; she had been her uncle's ward, and would one day inherit his fortune. Rose Marie Victoire Cormon was the last representative of a house which, plebeian though it was, had associated and often allied itself with the noblesse, and ranked among the oldest families in the province. In former times the Cormons had been intendants of the duchy of Alençon, and had given a goodly number of magistrates to the bench, and several bishops to the Church. M. de Sponde, Mlle. Cormon's maternal grandfather, was elected by the noblesse to the States-General; and M. Cormon, her father, had been asked to represent the Third Estate, but neither of them accepted the responsibility. For the last century, the daughters of the house had married into the noble families of the province, in such sort that the Cormons were grafted into pretty nearly every genealogical tree in the duchy. No burgher family came so near being noble.

The house in which the present Mlle. Cormon lived had never passed out of the family since it was built by Pierre Cormon in the reign of Henri IV.; and of all the old maid's worldy possessions, this one appealed most to the greed of her elderly suitors; though, so far from bringing in money, the ancestral home of the Cormons was a positive expense to its owner. But it is such an unusual thing, in the very centre of a country town, to find a house handsome without, convenient within, and free from mean surroundings, that all Alençon shared the feeling of envy.

The old mansion stood exactly half-way down the Rue du Val-Noble, *The Val-Noble,* as it was called, probably because the Brillante, the little stream which flows through the town, has hollowed out a little valley for itself in a dip of the land thereabouts. The most noticeable feature of the house was its massive architecture, of the style introduced from Italy by Marie de' Medici; all the corner-stones and facings were cut

with diamond-shaped bosses, in spite of the difficulty of working in the granite of which it is built. It was a two-storied house with a very high-pitched roof, and a row of dormer windows, each with its carved tympanum standing picturesquely enough above the lead-lined parapet with its ornamental balustrade. A grotesque gargoyle, the head of some fantastic bodyless beast, discharged the rain-water through its jaws into the street below, where great stone slabs, pierced with five holes, were placed to receive it. Each gable terminated in a leaden finial, a sign that this was a burgher's house, for none but nobles had a right to put up a weathercock in olden times. To right and left of the yard stood the stables and the coach-house; the kitchen, laundry, and wood-shed. One of the leaves of the great gate used to stand open; so that passers-by, looking in through the little low wicket with the bell attached, could see the parterre in the middle of a spacious paved court, and the low-clipped privet hedges which marked out miniature borders full of monthly roses, clove gilliflowers, scabious, and lilies, and Spanish broom; as well as the laurel bushes and pomegranates and myrtles which grew in tubs put out of doors for the summer.

The scrupulous neatness and tidiness of the place must have struck any stranger, and furnished him with a clue to the old maid's character. The mistress' eyes must have been unemployed, careful, and prying; less, perhaps, from any natural bent, than for want of any occupation. Who but an elderly spinster, at a loss how to fill an always empty day, would have insisted that no blade of grass should show itself in the paved courtyard, that the wall-tops should be scoured, that the broom should always be busy, that the coach should never be left with the leather curtains undrawn? Who else, from sheer lack of other employment, could have introduced something like Dutch cleanliness into a little province between Perche, Normandy, and Brittany, where the natives make boast of their crass indifference to comfort? The Chevalier never climbed the steps without reflecting inwardly that the house was fit for a peer of France; and du Bousquier simi-

larly considered that the Mayor of Alençon ought to live there.

A glass door at the top of the flight of steps gave admittance to an ante-chamber lighted by a second glass door opposite, above a corresponding flight of steps leading into the garden. This part of the house, a kind of gallery floored with square red tiles, and wainscoted to elbow-height, was a hospital for invalid family portraits; one here and there had lost an eye or sustained injury to a shoulder, another stood with a hole in the place where his hat should have been, yet another had lost a leg by amputation. Here cloaks, clogs, overshoes, and umbrellas were left; everybody deposited his belongings in the ante-chamber on his arrival, and took them again at his departure. A long bench was set against either wall for the servants who came of an evening with their lanterns to fetch home their masters and mistresses, and a big stove was set in the middle to mitigate the icy blasts which swept across from door to door.

This gallery, then, divided the ground floor into two equal parts. The staircase rose to the left on the side nearest the courtyard, the rest of the space being taken up by the great dining-room, with its windows looking out upon the garden, and a pantry beyond, which communicated with the kitchen. To the right lay the salon, lighted by four windows, and a couple of smaller rooms beyond it, a boudoir which gave upon the garden, and a room which did duty as a study and looked into the courtyard. There was a complete suite of rooms on the first floor, beside the Abbé de Sponde's apartments; while the attic story, in all probability roomy enough, had long since been given over to the tenancy of rats and mice. Mlle. Cormon used to report their nocturnal exploits to the Chevalier de Valois, and marvel at the futility of all measures taken against them.

The garden, about half an acre in extent, was bounded by the Brillante, so called from the mica spangles which glitter in its bed; not, however, in the Val-Noble, for the manufacturers and dyers of Alençon pour all their refuse into the shallow stream before it reaches this point; and the opposite

bank, as always happens wherever a stream passes through a town, was lined with houses where various thirsty industries were carried on. Luckily, Mlle. Cormon's neighbors were all of them quiet tradesmen—a baker, a fuller, and one or two cabinet-makers. Her garden, full of old-fashioned flowers, naturally ended in a terrace, by way of a quay, with a short flight of steps down to the water's edge. Try to picture the wall-flowers growing in blue-and-white glazed jars along the balustrade by the river, behold a shady walk to right and left beneath the square-clipped lime-trees, and you will have some idea of a scene full of unpretending cheerfulness and sober tranquillity; you can see the views of homely humble life along the opposite bank, the quaint houses, the trickling stream of the Brillante, the garden itself, the linden walks under the garden walls, and the venerable home built by the Cormons. How peaceful, how quiet it was! If there was no ostentation, there was nothing transitory, everything seemed to last for ever there.

The ground-floor rooms, therefore, were given over to social uses. You breathed the atmosphere of the Province, ancient, unalterable Province. The great square-shaped salon, with its four doors and four windows, was modestly wainscoted with carved panels, and painted gray. On the wall, above the single oblong mirror on the chimney-piece, the Hours, in monochrome, were ushering in the day. For this particular style of decoration, which used to infest the spaces above doors, the artist's invention devised the eternal Seasons which meet your eyes almost anywhere in central France, till you loathe the detestable Cupids engaged in reaping, skating, sowing seeds, or flinging flowers about. Every window was overarched with a sort of baldachin with green damask curtains drawn back with cords and huge tassels. The tapestry-covered furniture, with a darn here and there at the edges of the chairs, belonged distinctly to that period of the eighteenth century when curves and contortions were in the very height of fashion; the frames were painted and varnished, the subjects in the medallions on the backs were taken from La Fon-

taine. Four card-tables, a table for piquet, and another for backgammon filled up the immense space. A rock crystal chandelier, shrouded in green gauze, hung suspended from the prominent crossbeam which divided the ceiling, the only plastered ceiling in the house. Two branched candle-sconces were fixed into the wall above the chimney-piece, where a couple of blue Sèvres vases stood on either side of a copper gilt clock which represented a scene taken from *Le Déserteur* —a proof of the prodigious popularity of Sedaine's work. It was a group of no less than eleven figures, four inches high; the Deserter emerging from jail escorted by a guard of soldiers, while a young person, swooning in the foreground, held out his reprieve. The hearth and fire-irons were of the same date and style. The more recent family portraits—one or two Rigauds and three pastels by Latour—adorned the wainscot panels.

The study, paneled entirely in old lacquer work, red and black and gold, would have fetched fabulous sums a few years later; Mlle. Cormon was as far as possible from suspecting its value; but if she had been offered a thousand crowns for every panel, she would not have parted with a single one. It was a part of her system to alter nothing, and everywhere in the provinces the belief in ancestral hoards is very strong. The boudoir, never used, was hung with the old-fashioned chintz so much run after nowadays by amateurs of the "Pompadour style," as it is called.

The dining-room was paved with black-and-white stone; it had not been ceiled, but the joists and beams were painted. Ranged round the walls, beneath a flowered trellis, painted in fresco, stood the portentous, marble-topped sideboards, indispensable in the warfare waged in the provinces against the powers of digestion. The chairs were cane-seated and varnished, the doors of unpolished walnut wood. Everything combined admirably to complete the general effect, the old-world air of the house within and without. The provincial spirit had preserved all as it had always been; nothing was new or old, young or decrepit. You felt a sense of chilly precision everywhere.

Any tourist in Brittany, Normandy, Maine, or Anjou must have seen some house more or less like this in one or other provincial town; for the Hôtel de Cormon was in its way a very pattern and model of burgher houses over a large part of France, and the better deserves a place in this chronicle because it is at once a commentary on the manners of the place and the expression of its ideas. Who does not feel, even now, how much the life within the old walls was one of peaceful routine?

For such library as the house possessed you must have descended rather below the level of the Brillante. There stood a solidly clasped oak-bound collection, none the worse, nay, rather the better, for a thick coating of dust; a collection kept as carefully as a cider-growing district is wont to keep the products of the presses of Burgundy, Touraine, Gascony, and the South. Here were works full of native force, and exquisite qualities, with an added perfume of antiquity. No one will import poor wines when the cost of carriage is so heavy.

Mlle. Cormon's whole circle consisted of about a hundred and fifty persons. Of these, some went into the country, some were ill, others from home on business in the department, but there was a faithful band which always came, unless Mlle. Cormon gave an evening party in form; so also did those persons who were bound either by their duties or old habit to live in Alençon itself. All these people were of ripe age. A few among them had traveled, but scarcely any of them had gone beyond the province, and one or two had been implicated in Chouannerie. People could begin to speak freely of the war, now that rewards had come to the heroic defenders of the good cause. M. de Valois had been concerned in the last rising, when the Marquis de Montauran lost his life, betrayed by his mistress; and Marche-à-Terre, now peacefully driving a grazier's trade by the banks of the Mayenne, had made a famous name for himself. M. de Valois, during the past six months, had supplied the key to several shrewd tricks played off upon Hulot, the old Republican, commander of a

demi-brigade stationed at Alençon from 1798 till 1800. There was talk of Hulot yet in the countryside.*

The women made little pretence of dress, except on Wednesdays when Mlle. Cormon gave a dinner party, and last week's guests came to pay their "visit of digestion." On Wednesday evening the rooms were filled. Guests and visitors came in gala dress; here and there a woman brought her knitting or her tapestry work, and some young ladies unblushingly drew patterns for *point d'Alençon,* by which they supported themselves. Men brought their wives, because there was so few young fellows there; no whisper could pass unnoticed, and therefore there was no danger of love-making for maid or matron. Every evening at six o'clock the lobby was filled with articles of dress, with sticks, cloaks, and lanterns. Every one was so well acquainted, the customs of the house were so primitive, that if by any chance the Abbé de Sponde was in the lime-tree walk, and Mlle. Cormon in her room, neither Josette the maid nor Jacquelin the man thought it necessary to inform them of the arrival of visitors. The first comer waited till some one else arrived; and when they mustered players sufficiently for whist or boston, the game was begun without waiting for the Abbé de Sponde or Mademoiselle. When it grew dark, Josette or Jacquelin brought lights as soon as the bell rang, and the old Abbé out in the garden, seeing the drawing-room windows illuminated, hastened slowly towards the house. Every evening the piquet, boston, and whist tables were full, giving an average of twenty-five or thirty persons, including those who came to chat; but often there were as many as thirty or forty, and then Jacquelin took candles into the study and the boudoir. Between eight and nine at night the servants began to fill the ante-chamber; and nothing short of a revolution would have found any one in the salon by ten o'clock. At that hour the frequenters of the house were walking home through the streets, discussing the points made, or keeping up a conversation begun in the salon. Sometimes the talk turned on a

* See *Les Chouans.*

pocket-handkerchief of land on which somebody had an eye, sometimes it was the division of an inheritance and disputes among the legatees, or the pretensions of the aristocratic set. You see exactly the same thing at Paris when the theatres disgorge.

Some people who talk a great deal about poetry and understand nothing about it, are wont to rail at provincial towns and provincial ways; but lean your forehead on your left hand, as you sit with your feet on the fire-dogs, and rest your elbow on your knee, and then—if you have fully realized for yourself the level pleasant landscape, the house, the interior, the folks within it and their interests, interests that seem all the larger because the mental horizon is so limited (as a grain of gold is beaten thin between two sheets of parchment)—then ask yourself what human life is. Try to decide between the engraver of the hieroglyphic birds on an Egyptian obelisk, and one of these folk in Alençon playing boston through a score of years with du Bousquier, M. de Valois, Mlle. Cormon, the President of the Tribunal, the Public Prosecutor, the Abbé de Sponde, Mme. Granson *e tutti quanti.* If the daily round, the daily pacing of the same track in the footsteps of many yesterdays, is not exactly happiness, it is so much like it that others, driven by dint of storm-tossed days to reflect on the blessings of calm, will say that it is happiness indeed.

To give the exact measure of the importance of Mlle. Cormon's salon, it will suffice to add that du Bousquier, a born statistician, computed that its frequenters mustered among them a hundred and thirty-one votes in the electoral college, and eighteen hundred thousand livres of income derived from lands in the province. The town of Alençon was not, it is true, completely represented there. The aristocratic section, for instance, had a salon of their own, and the receiver-general's house was a sort of official inn kept, as in duty bound, by the Government, where everybody who was anybody danced, flirted, fluttered, fell in love, and supped. One or two unclassified persons kept up the communications between

Mlle. Cormon's salon and the other two, but the Cormon salon criticised all that passed in the opposed camps very severely. Sumptuous dinners gave rise to unfavorable comment; ices at a dance caused searchings of heart; the women's behavior and dress and any innovations were much discussed.

Mlle. Cormon being, as it were, the style of the firm, and figure-head of an imposing coterie, was inevitably the object of any ambition as profound as that of the du Bousquier or the Chevalier de Valois. To both gentlemen she meant a seat in the Chamber of Deputies, with a peerage for the Chevalier, a receiver-general's post for du Bousquier. A salon admittedly of the first rank is every whit as hard to build up in a country town as in Paris. And here was the salon ready made. To marry Mlle. Cormon was to be lord of Alençon. Finally, Athanase, the only one of the three suitors that had ceased to calculate, cared as much for the woman as for her money.

Is there not a whole strange drama (to use the modern cant phrase) in the relative positions of these four human beings? There is something grotesque, is there not, in the idea of three rival suitors eagerly pressing about an old maid who never so much as suspected their intentions, in spite of her intense and very natural desire to be married? Yet although, things being so, it may seem an extraordinary thing that she should not have married before, it is not difficult to explain how and why, in spite of her fortune and her three suitors, Mlle. Cormon was still unwed.

From the first, following the family tradition, Mlle. Cormon had always wished to marry a noble, but between the years 1789 and 1799 circumstances were very much against her. While she would have wished to be the wife of a person of condition, she was horribly afraid of the Revolutionary Tribunal; and these two motives weighing about equally, she remained stationary, according to a law which holds equally good in æsthetics or statics. At the same time, the condition of suspended judgment is not unpleasant for a girl, so long

as she feels young and thinks that she can choose where she pleases. But, as all France knows, the system of government immediately preceding the wars of Napoleon produced a vast number of widows; and the number of heiresses was altogether out of proportion to the number of eligible men. When order was restored in the country, in the time of the Consulate, external difficulties made marriage as much of a problem as ever for Rose Marie Victoire. On the one hand, she declined to marry an elderly man; and, on the other, dread of ridicule and circumstances put quite young men out of the question. In those days heads of families married their sons as mere boys, because in this way they escaped the conscription. With the obstinacy of a landed proprietor, mademoiselle would not hear of marrying a military man; she had no wish to take a husband only to give him back to the Emperor, she wished to keep him for herself. And so, between 1804 and 1815 it was impossible to compete with a younger generation of girls, too numerous already in times when cannon shot had thinned the ranks of marriageable men.

Again, apart from Mlle. Cormon's predilection for birth, she had a very pardonable craze for being loved for her own sake. You would scarcely believe the lengths to which she carried this fancy. She set her wits to work to lay snares for her admirers, to try their sentiments; and that with such success, that the unfortunates one and all fell into them, and succumbed in the whimsical ordeals through which they passed at unawares. Mlle. Cormon did not study her suitors, she played the spy upon them. A careless word, or a joke, and the lady did not understand jokes very well, was excuse enough to dismiss an aspirant as found wanting. This had neither spirit nor delicacy; that was untruthful and not a Christian; one wanted to cut down tall timber and coin money under the marriage canopy; another was not the man to make her happy; or, again, she had her suspicions of gout in the family, or took fright at her wooer's antecedents. Like Mother Church, she would fain see a priest without blemish

at her altar. And then Rose Marie Victoire made the worst of herself, and was as anxious to be loved, with all her factitious plainness and imaginary faults, as other women are to be married for virtues which they have not and for borrowed beauty. Mlle. Cormon's ambition had its source in the finest instincts of womanhood. She would reward her lover by discovering to him a thousand virtues after marriage, as other women reveal the many little faults kept hitherto strenuously out of sight. But no one understood. The noble girl came in contact with none but commonplace natures, with whom practical interests came first; the finer calculations of feeling were beyond their comprehension.

She grew more and more conspicuous as the critical period so ingeniously called "second youth" drew nearer. Her fancy for making the worst of herself with increasing success frightened away the latest recruits; they hesitated to unite their lot with hers. The strategy of her game of hoodman-blind (the virtues to be revealed when the finder's eyes were opened) was a complex study for which few men have inclination; they prefer perfection ready-made. An ever-present dread of being married for her money made her unreasonably distrustful and uneasy. She fell foul of the rich, and the rich could look higher; she was afraid of poor men, she would not believe them capable of that disinterestedness on which she set such store; till at length her rejections and other circumstances let in an unexpected light upon the minds of suitors thus presented for her selection like dried peas on a seedman's sieve. Every time a marriage project came to nothing, the unfortunate girl, being gradually led to despise mankind, saw the other sex at last in a false light. Inevitably, in her inmost soul, she grew misanthropic, a tinge of bitterness was infused into her conversation, a certain harshness into her expression. And her manners became more and more rigid under the stress of enforced celibacy; in her despair she sought to perfect herself. It was a noble vengeance. She would polish and cut for God the rough diamond rejected by men

Before long public opinion was against Mlle. Cormon. People accept the verdict which a woman passes upon herself if, being free to marry, she fails to fulfil expectations, or is known to have refused eligible suitors. Every one decides that she has her own reasons for declining marriage, and those reasons are always misinterpreted. There was some hidden physical defect or deformity, they said; but she, poor girl, was pure as an angel, healthy as a child, and overflowing with kindness. Nature had meant her to know all the joys, all the happiness, all the burdens of motherhood.

Yet in her person Mlle. Cormon did not find a natural auxiliary to gain her heart's desire. She had no beauty, save of the kind so improperly called "the devil's"; that full-blown freshness of youth which, theologically speaking, the Devil never could have possessed; unless, indeed, we are to look for an explanation of the expression in the Devil's continual desire of refreshing himself. The heiress' feet were large and flat; when, on rainy days, she crossed the wet streets between her house and St. Leonard's, her raised skirt displayed (without malice, be it said) a leg which scarcely seemed to belong to a woman, so muscular was it, with a small, firm, prominent calf like a sailor's. She had a figure for a wet nurse. Her thick, honest waist, her strong, plump arms, her red hands; everything about her, in short, was in keeping with the round, expansive contours and portly fairness of the Norman style of beauty. Wide open, prominent eyes of no particular color gave to a face, by no means distinguished in its round outlines, a sheepish, astonished expression not altogether inappropriate, however, in an old maid: even if Rose had not been innocent, she must still have seemed so. An aquiline nose was oddly assorted with a low forehead, for a feature of that type is almost invariably found in company with a lofty brow. In spite of thick, red lips, the sign of great kindliness of nature, there were evidently so few ideas behind that forehead, that Rose's heart could scarcely have been directed by her brain. Kind she must certainly be, but not gracious. And we are apt to judge the

defects of goodness very harshly, while we make the most of the redeeming qualities of vice.

An extraordinary length of chestnut hair lent Rose Cormon such beauty as belongs to vigor and luxuriance, her chief personal characteristics. In the time of her pretensions she had a trick of turning her face in three-quarters profile to display a very pretty ear, gracefully set between the azure-streaked white throat and the temple, and thrown into relief by thick masses of her hair. Dressed in a ball gown, with her head poised at this angle, Rose might almost seem beautiful. With her protuberant bust, her waist, her high health, she used to draw exclamations of admiration from Imperial officers. "What a fine girl!" they used to say.

But, as years went on, the stoutness induced by a quiet, regular life distributed itself so unfortunately over her person, that its original proportions were destroyed. No known variety of corset could have discovered the poor spinster's hips at this period of her existence; she might have been cast in one uniform piece. The youthful proportions of her figure were completely lost; her dimensions had grown so excessive, that no one could see her stoop without fearing that, being so topheavy, she would certainly overbalance herself; but nature had provided a sufficient natural counterpoise, which enabled her to dispense with all adventitious aid from "dress improvers." Everything about Rose was very genuine.

Her chin developed a triple fold, which reduced the apparent length of her throat, and made it no easy matter to turn her head. She had no wrinkles, she had creases. Wags used to assert that she powdered herself, as nurses powder babies, to prevent chafing of the skin. To a young man, consumed, like Athanase, with suppressed desires, this excessive corpulence offered just the kind of physical charm which could not fail to attract youth. Youthful imaginations, essentially intrepid, stimulated by appetite, are prone to dilate upon the beauties of that living expanse. So does the plump partridge allure the epicure's knife. And, indeed, any debt-burdened young man of fashion in Paris would have resigned himself

readily enough to fulfilling his part of the contract and making Mlle. Cormon happy. Still the unfortunate spinster had already passed her fortieth year!

At this period of enforced loneliness, after the long, vain struggle to fill her life with those interests that are all in all to woman, she was fortifying herself in virtue by the most strict observance of religious duties: she had turned to the great consolation of well-preserved virginity. A confessor, endowed with no great wisdom, had directed Mlle. Cormon in the paths of asceticism for some three years past, recommending a system of self-scourging calculated, according to modern doctors, to produce an effect the exact opposite of that expected by the poor priest, whose knowledge of hygiene was but limited. These absurd practices were beginning to bring a certain monastic tinge to Rose Cormon's face; with frequent pangs of despair, she watched the sallow hues of middle age creeping across its natural white and red; while the trace of down about the corners of her upper lip showed a distinct tendency to darken and increase like smoke. Her temples grew shiny. She had passed the turning-point, in fact. It was known for certain in Alençon that Mlle. Cormon suffered from heated blood. She inflicted her confidence upon the Chevalier de Valois, reckoning up the number of foot-baths that she took, and devising cooling treatment with him. And that shrewd observer would end by taking out his snuff-box, and gazing at the portrait of the Princess Goritza as he remarked, "But the real sedative, my dear young lady, would be a good and handsome husband."

"But whom could one trust?" returned she.

But the Chevalier only flicked away the powdered snuff from the creases of his paduasoy waistcoat. To anybody else the proceeding would have seemed perfectly natural, but it always made the poor old maid feel uncomfortable.

The violence of her objectless longings grew to such a height that she shrank from looking a man in the face, so afraid was she that the thoughts which pierced her heart might be read in her eyes. It was one of her whims possibly a later de-

velopment of her former tactics, to behave almost ungraciously to the possible suitors towards whom she still felt herself attracted, so afraid was she of being accused of folly. Most people in her circle were utterly incapable of appreciating her motives, so noble throughout; they explained her manner to her coevals in single blessedness by a theory of revenge for some past slight.

With the beginning of the year 1815 Rose Cormon had reached the fatal age, to which she did not confess. She was forty-two. By this time her desire to be married had reached a degree of intensity bordering on monomania. She saw her chances of motherhood fast slipping away for ever; and, in her divine ignorance, she longed above all things for children of her own. There was not a soul found in Alençon to impute a single unchaste desire to the virtuous girl. She loved love, taking all for granted, without realizing for herself what love would be—a devout Agnès, incapable of inventing one of the little shifts of Molière's heroine.

She had been counting upon chance of late. The disbanding of the Imperial troops and the reconstruction of the King's army was sending a tide of military men back to their native places, some of them on half-pay, some with pensions, some without, and all of them anxious to find some way of amending their bad fortune, and of finishing their days in a fashion which would mean the beginning of happiness for Mlle. Cormon. It would be hard indeed if she could not find a single brave and honorable man among all those who were coming back to the neighborhood. He must have a sound constitution in the first place, he must be of suitable age, and a man whose personal character would serve as a passport to his Bonapartist opinions; perhaps he might even be willing to turn Royalist for the sake of gaining a lost social position.

Supported by these mental calculations, Mlle. Cormon maintained the severity of her attitude for the first few months of the year; but the men that came back to the town were all either too old or too young, or their characters were

too bad, or their opinions too Bonapartist, or their station in life was incompatible with her position, fortune, and habits. The case grew more and more desperate every day. Officers high in the service had used their advantages under Napoleon to marry, and these gentlemen now became Royalists for the sake of their families. In vain had she put up prayers to heaven to send her a husband that she might be happy in Christian fashion; it was written, no doubt, that she should die virgin and martyr, for not a single likely-looking man presented himself.

In the course of conversation in her drawing-room of an evening, the frequenters of the house kept the police register under tolerably strict supervision; no one could arrive in Alençon but they informed themselves at once as to the newcomer's mode of life, quality, and fortune. But, at the same time, Alençon is not a town to attract many strangers; it is not on the highroad to any larger city; there are no chance arrivals; naval officers on their way to Brest do not so much as stop in the place.

Poor Mlle. Cormon at last comprehended that her choice was reduced to the natives. At times her eyes took an almost fierce expression, to which the Chevalier would respond with a keen glance at her as he drew out his snuff-box to gaze at the Princess Goritza. M. de Valois knew that in feminine jurisprudence, fidelity to an old love is a guarantee for the new. But Mlle. Cormon, it cannot be denied, was not very intelligent. His snuff-box strategy was wasted upon her.

She redoubled her watchfulness, the better to combat the "evil one," and with devout rigidness and the sternest principles she consigned her cruel sufferings to the secret places of her life.

At night, when she was alone, she thought of her lost youth, of her faded bloom, of the thwarted instincts of her nature; and while she laid her passionate longings at the foot of the Cross, together with all the poetry doomed to remain pent within her, she vowed inwardly to take the first man that was willing to marry her, just as he was, without putting him to

any proof whatsoever. Sounding her own dispositions, after a series of vigils, each more trying than the last, in her own mind she went so far as to espouse a sub-lieutenant, a tobacco-smoker to boot; nay, he was even head over ears in debt. Him she proposed to transform with care, submission, and gentleness into a pattern for mankind. But only in the silence of night could she plan these imaginary marriages, in which she amused herself with playing the sublime part of guardian angel; with morning, if Josette found her mistress' bedclothes turned topsy-turvy, mademoiselle had recovered her dignity; with morning, after breakfast, she would have nothing less than a solid landowner, a well-preserved man of forty—a young man, as you may say.

The Abbé de Sponde was incapable of giving his niece assistance of any sort in schemes for marriage. The good man, aged seventy or thereabouts, referred all the calamities of the Revolution to the design of a Providence prompt to punish a dissolute Church. For which reasons M. de Sponde had long since entered upon a deserted path to heaven, the way trodden by the hermits of old. He led an ascetic life, simply, unobtrusively, hiding his deeds of charity, his constant prayer and fasting from all other eyes. Necessity was laid upon all priests, he thought, to do as he did; he preached by example, turning a serene and smiling face upon the world, while he completely cut himself off from worldly interests. All his thoughts were given to the afflicted, to the needs of the Church, and the saving of his own soul. He left the management of his property to his niece. She paid over his yearly income to him, and, after a slight deduction for his maintenance, the whole of it went in private almsgiving or in donations to the Church.

All the Abbé's affections were centered upon his niece, and she looked upon him as a father. He was a somewhat absent-minded father, however, without the remotest conception of the rebellion of the flesh; a father who gave thanks to God for maintaining his beloved daughter in a state of virginity; for from his youth up he had held, with St. John Chrysostom,

"that virginity is as much above the estate of marriage as the angels are above man."

Mlle. Cormon was accustomed to look up to her uncle; she did not venture to confide her wishes for a change of condition to him; and he, good man, on his side was accustomed to the ways of the house, and perhaps might not have relished the introduction of a master into it. Absorbed in thoughts of the distress which he relieved, or lost in fathomless inner depths of prayer, he was often unconscious of what was going on about him; frequenters of the house set this down to absent-mindedness; but while he said little, his silence was neither unsociable nor ungenial. A tall, spare, grave, and solemn man, his face told of kindly feeling and a great inward peace. His presence in the house seemed as it were to consecrate it. The Abbé entertained a strong liking for that elderly sceptic the Chevalier de Valois. Far apart as their lives were, the two grand wrecks of the eighteenth century clergy and noblesse recognized each other by generic signs and tokens; and the Chevalier, for that matter, could converse with unction with the Abbé, just as he talked like a father with his grisettes.

Some may think that Mlle. Cormon would leave no means untried to gain her end; that among other permissible feminine artifices, for instance, she would turn to her toilettes, wear low-cut bodices, use the passive coquetry of a display of the splendid equipment with which she might take the field. On the contrary, she was as heroic and steadfast in her high-necked gown as a sentry in his sentry-box. All her dresses, bonnets, and finery were made in Alençon by two hunchbacked sisters, not wanting in taste. But in spite of the entreaties of the two artists, Mlle. Cormon utterly declined the adventitious aid of elegance; she must be substantial throughout, body and plumage, and possibly her heavy-looking dresses became her not amiss. Laugh who will at her, poor thing. Generous natures, those who never trouble themselves about the form in which good feeling shows itself, but admire it wherever they find it, will see something sublime in this trait.

Perhaps some slight-natured feminine critic may begin to carp, and say that there is no woman in France so simple but that she can angle for a husband; that Mlle. Cormon is one of those abnormal creatures which common-sense forbids us to take for a type; that the best or the most babyish unmarried woman that has a mind to hook a gudgeon can put forward some physical charm wherewith to bait her line. But when you begin to think that the sublime Apostolic Roman Catholic is still a power in Brittany and the ancient duchy of Alençon, these criticisms fall to the ground. Faith and piety admit no such subtleties. Mlle. Cormon kept to the straight path, preferring the misfortunes of a maidenhood infinitely prolonged to the misery of untruthfulness, to the sin of small deceit. Armed with self-discipline, such a girl cannot make a sacrifice of a principle; and therefore love (or self-interest) must make a determined effort to find her out and win her.

Let us have the courage to make a confession, painful in these days when religion is nothing but a means of advancement for some, a dream for others; the devout are subject to a kind of moral ophthalmia, which, by the especial grace of Providence, removes a host of small earthly concerns out of the sight of the pilgrim of Eternity. In a word, the devout are apt to be dense in a good many ways. Their stupidity, at the same time, is a measure of the force with which their spirits turn heavenwards; albeit the sceptical M. de Valois maintained that it is a moot point whether stupid women take naturally to piety, or whether piety, on the other hand, has a stupefying effect upon an intelligent girl.

It must be borne in mind that it is the purest orthodox goodness, ready to drink rapturously of every cup set before it, to submit devoutly to the will of God, to see the print of the divine finger everywhere in the day of life,—that it is catholic virtue stealing like hidden light into the innermost recesses of this History that alone can bring everything into right relief, and widen its significance for those who yet have faith. And, again, if the stupidity is admitted, why should

the misfortunes of stupidity be less interesting than the woes of genius in a world where fools so overwhelmingly preponderate?

To resume. Mlle. Cormon's divine girlish ignorance of life was an offence in the eyes of the world. She was anything but observant, as her treatment of her suitors sufficiently showed. At this very moment, a girl of sixteen who had never opened a novel in her life might have read a hundred chapters of romance in Athanase's eyes. But Mlle. Cormon saw nothing all the while; she never knew that the young man's voice was unsteady with emotion which he dared not express, and the woman who could invent refinements of high sentiment to her own undoing could not discern the same feelings in Athanase.

Those who know that qualities of heart and brain are as independent of each other as genius and greatness of soul, will see nothing extraordinary in this psychological phenomenon. A complete human being is so rare a prodigy, that Socrates, that pearl among mankind, agreed with a contemporary phrenologist that he himself was born to be a very scurvy knave. A great general may save his country at Zurich, and yet take a commission from contractors; a banker's doubtful honesty does not prevent him from being a statesman; a great composer may give the world divine music, and yet forge another man's signature, and a woman of refined feeling may be excessively weak-minded. In short, a devout woman may have a very lofty soul, and yet have no ears to hear the voice of another noble soul at her side.

The unaccountable freaks of physical infirmity find a parallel in the moral world. Here was a good creature making her preserves and breaking her heart till she grew almost ridiculous, because, forsooth, there was no one to eat them but her uncle and herself. Those who sympathized with her for the sake of her good qualities, or, in some cases, on account of her defects, used to laugh over her disappointments. People began to wonder what would become of so fine a property with all Mlle. Cormon's savings, and her uncle's to boot.

It was long since they began to suspect that at bottom, and in spite of appearances, Mlle. Cormon was "an original." Originality is not allowed in the provinces; originality means that you have ideas which nobody else can understand, and in a country town people's intellects, like their manner of life, must all be on a level. Even in 1804 Rose's matrimonial prospects were considered so problematical, that "to marry like Mlle. Cormon" was a current saying in Alençon, and the most ironical way of suggesting Such-an-one would never marry at all.

The necessity to laugh at some one must indeed be imperious in France, if any one could be found to raise a smile at the expense of that excellent creature. Not merely did she entertain the whole town, she was charitable, she was good; she was incapable of saying a spiteful word; and more than that, she was so much in unison with the whole spirit of the place, its manners and its customs, that she was generally beloved as the very incarnation of the life of the province; she had imbibed all its prejudices and made its interests hers; she had never gone beyond its limits, she adored it; she was embedded in provincial tradition. In spite of her eighteen thousand livres per annum, a tolerably large income for the neighborhood, she accommodated herself to the ways of her less wealthy neighbors. When she went to her country house, the Prébaudet, for instance, she drove over in an old-fashioned wicker cariole hung with white leather straps, and fitted with a couple of rusty weather-beaten leather curtains, which scarcely closed it in. The equipage, drawn by a fat broken-winded mare, was known all over the town. Jacquelin, the man-servant, cleaned it as carefully as if it had been the finest brougham from Paris. Mademoiselle was fond of it; it had lasted her a dozen years, a fact which she was wont to point out with the triumphant joy of contented parsimony. Most people were grateful to her for forbearing to humiliate them by splendor which she might have flaunted before their eyes; it is even credible that if she had sent for a calèche from Paris, it would have caused more talk than any of her "disap-

pointments." After all, the finest carriage in the world, like the old-fashioned cariole, could only have taken her to the Prébaudet; and in the provinces they always keep the end in view, and trouble themselves very little about the elegance of the means, provided that they are sufficient.

To complete the picture of Mlle. Cormon's household and domestic life, several figures must be grouped round Mlle. Cormon and the Abbé de Sponde. Jacquelin, and Josette, and Mariette, the cook, ministered to the comfort of uncle and niece.

Jacquelin, a man of forty, short and stout, dark-haired and ruddy, with a countenance of the Breton sailor type, had been in service in the house for twenty-two years. He waited at table, groomed the mare, worked in the garden, cleaned the Abbé's shoes, ran errands, chopped firewood, drove the cariole, went to the Prébaudet for corn, hay and straw, and slept like a dormouse in the ante-chamber of an evening. He was supposed to be fond of Josette, and Josette was six-and-thirty. But if she had married him, Mlle. Cormon would have dismissed her, and so the poor lovers were fain to save up their wages in silence, and to wait and hope for mademoiselle's marriage, much as the Jews look for the advent of the Messiah.

Josette came from the district between Alençon and Mortagne; she was a fat little woman. Her face, which reminded you of a mud-bespattered apricot, was not wanting either in character or intelligence. She was supposed to rule her mistress. Josette and Jacquelin, feeling sure of the event, found consolation, presumably by discounting the future. Mariette, the cook, had likewise been in the family for fifteen years; she was skilled in the cookery of the country and the preparation of the most esteemed provincial dishes.

Perhaps the fat old bay mare, of the Normandy breed, which Mlle. Cormon used to drive to the Prébaudet, ought to count a good deal, for the affection which the five inmates of the house bore the animal amounted to mania. Penelope, for that was her name, had been with them for eighteen years;

and so well was she cared for, so regularly tended, that Jacquelin and mademoiselle hoped to get quite another ten years of work out of her. Penelope was a stock subject and source of interest in their lives. It seemed as if poor Mlle. Cormon, with no child of her own, lavished all her maternal affection upon the lucky beast. Almost every human being leading a solitary life in a crowded world will surround himself with a make-believe family of some sort, and Penelope took the place of dogs, cats, or canaries.

These four faithful servants—for Penelope's intelligence had been trained till it was very nearly on a par with the wits of the other three, while they had sunk pretty much into the dumb, submissive jog-trot life of the animal—these four retainers came and went and did the same things day after day, with the unfailing regularity of clockwork. But, to use their own expression, "they had eaten their white bread first." Mlle. Cormon suffered from a fixed idea upon the nerves; and, after the wont of such sufferers, she grew fidgety and hard to please, not by force of nature, but because she had no outlet for her energies. She had neither husband nor children to fill her thoughts, so they fastened upon trifles. She would talk for hours at a stretch of some inconceivably small matter, of a dozen serviettes, for instance, lettered Z, which somehow or other had been put before O.

"Why, what can Josette be thinking about?" she cried. "Has she no notion what she is doing?"

Jacquelin chanced to be late in feeding Penelope one afternoon, so every day for a whole week afterwards mademoiselle inquired whether the horse had been fed at two o'clock. Her narrow imagination spent itself on small matters. A layer of dust forgotten by the feather mop, a slice of scorched toast, an omission to close the shutters on Jacquelin's part when the sun shone in upon furniture and carpets,—all these important trifles produced serious trouble, mademoiselle lost her temper over them. "Nothing was the same as it used to be. The servants of old days were so changed that she did not know them. They were spoilt. She was too good to them," and

so forth and so forth. One day Josette gave her mistress the *Journée du Chrétien* instead of the *Quinzaine de Pâques*. The whole town heard of the mistake before night. Mademoiselle had been obliged to get up and come out of church, disturbing whole rows of chairs and raising the wildest conjectures, so that she was obliged afterwards to give all her friends a full account of the mishap.

"Josette," she said mildly, when she had come the whole way home from St. Leonard's, "this must never happen again."

Mlle. Cormon was far from suspecting that it was a very fortunate thing for her that she could vent her spleen in petty squabbles. The mind, like the body, requires exercise; these quarrels were a sort of mental gymnastics. Josette and Jacqueline took such unevennesses of temper as the agricultural laborer takes the changes of the weather. The three good souls could say among themselves that "It is a fine day," or "It rains," without murmuring against the powers above. Sometimes in the kitchen of a morning they would wonder in what humor mademoiselle would wake, much as a farmer studies the morning mists. And of necessity Mlle. Cormon ended by seeing herself in all the infinitely small details which made up her life. Herself and God, her confessor and her washing-days, the preserves to be made, the services of the church to attend, and the uncle to take care of,—all these things absorbed faculties that were none of the strongest. For her the atoms of life were magnified by virtue of an optical process peculiar to the selfish or the self-absorbed. To so perfectly healthy a woman, the slightest symptom of indigestion was a positively alarming portent. She lived, moreover, under the ferule of the system of medicine practised by our grandsires; a drastic dose fit to kill Penelope, taken four times a year, merely gave Mlle. Cormon a fillip.

What tremendous ransackings of the week's dietary if Josette, assisting her mistress to dress, discovered a scarcely visible pimple on shoulders that still boasted a satin skin! What triumph if the maid could bring a certain hare to her

mistress' recollection, and trace the accursed pimple to its origin in that too heating article of food! With what joy the two women would cry, "It is the hare beyond a doubt!"

"Mariette over-seasoned it," mademoiselle would add; "I always tell her not to overdo it for my uncle and me, but Mariette has no more memory than——"

"Than the hare," suggested Josette.

"It is the truth," returned mademoiselle; "she has no more memory than the hare; you have just hit it."

Four times in a year, at the beginning of each season, Mlle. Cormon went to spend a certain number of days at the Prébaudet. It was now the middle of May, when she liked to see how her apple-trees had "snowed," as they say in the cider country, an allusion to the white blossoms strewn in the orchards in the spring. When the circles of fallen petals look like snow-drifts under the trees, the proprietor may hope to have abundance of cider in the autumn. Mlle. Cormon estimated her barrels, and at the same time superintended any necessary after-winter repairs, planning out work in the garden and orchard, from which she drew no inconsiderable supplies. Each time of year had its special business.

Mademoiselle used to give a farewell dinner to her faithful inner circle before leaving, albeit she would see them again at the end of three weeks. All Alençon knew when the journey was to be undertaken. Any one that had fallen behindhand immediately paid a call, her drawing-room was filled; everybody wished her a prosperous journey, as if she had been starting for Calcutta. Then, in the morning, all the tradespeople were standing in their doorways; every one, great and small, watched the cariole go past, and it seemed as if everybody learned a piece of fresh news when one repeated after another, "So Mlle. Cormon is going to the Prébaudet."

One would remark, "She has bread ready baked, she has!"

And his neighbor would return, "Eh! my lads, she is a good woman; if property always fell into such hands as hers, there would not be a beggar to be seen in the countryside."

Or another would exclaim, "Hullo! I should not wonder if our oldest vines are in flower, for there is Mlle. Cormon setting out for the Prébaudet. How comes it that she is so little given to marrying?"

"I should be quite ready to marry her, all the same," a wag would answer. "The marriage is half made—one side is willing, but the other isn't. Pooh! the oven is heating for M. du Bousquier."

"*M. du Bousquier?* She has refused him."

At every house that evening people remarked solemnly, "Mlle. Cormon has gone."

Or perhaps, "So you have let Mlle. Cormon go!"

The Wednesday selected by Suzanne for making a scandal chanced to be this very day of leave-taking, when Mlle. Cormon nearly drove Josette to distraction over the packing of the parcels which she meant to take with her. A good deal that was done and said in the town that morning was like to lend additional interest to the farewell gathering at night. While the old maid was busily making preparations for her journey; while the astute Chevalier was playing his game of piquet in the house of Mlle. Armande de Gordes, sister of the aged Marquis de Gordes, and queen of the aristocratic salon, Mme. Granson had sounded the alarm bell in half a score of houses. There was not a soul but felt some curiosity to see what sort of figure the seducer would cut that evening; and to Mme. Granson and the Chevalier de Valois it was an important matter to know how Mlle. Cormon would take the news, in her double quality of marriageable spinster and lady president of the Maternity Fund. As for the unsuspecting du Bousquier, he was taking the air on the Parade. He was just beginning to think that Suzanne had made a fool of him; and this suspicion only confirmed the rules which he had laid down with regard to womankind.

On these high days the cloth was laid about half-past three in the Maison Cormon. Four o'clock was the state dinner hour in Alençon, on ordinary days they dined at two, as in the time of the Empire; but, then, they supped!

Mlle. Cormon always felt an inexpressible sense of satisfaction when she was dressed to receive her guests as mistress of her house. It was one of the pleasures which she most relished, be it said without malice, though egoism certainly lay beneath the feeling. When thus arrayed for conquest, a ray of hope slid across the darkness of her soul; a voice within her cried that nature had not endowed her so abundantly in vain, that surely some enterprising man was about to appear for her. She felt the younger for the wish, and the fresher for her toilet; she looked at her stout figure with a certain elation; and afterwards, when she went downstairs to submit salon, study, and boudoir to an awful scrutiny, this sense of satisfaction still remained with her. To and fro she went, with the naïve contentment of the rich man who feels conscious at every moment that he is rich and will lack for nothing all his life long. She looked round upon her furniture, the eternal furniture, the antiquities, the lacquered panels, and told herself that such fine things ought to have a master.

After admiring the dining-room, where the space was filled by the long table with its snowy cloth, its score of covers symmetrically laid; after going through the roll-call of a squadron of bottles ordered up from the cellar, and making sure that each bore an honorable label; and finally, after a most minute verification of a score of little slips of paper on which the Abbé had written the names of the guests with a trembling hand—it was the sole occasion on which he took an active part in the household, and the place of every guest always gave rise to grave discussion—after this review, Mlle. Cormon in her fine array went into the garden to join her uncle; for at this pleasantest hour of the day he used to walk up and down the terrace beside the Brillante, listening to the twittering of the birds, which, hidden closely among the leaves in the lime-tree walk, knew no fear of boys or sportsmen.

Mlle. Cormon never came out to the Abbé during these intervals of waiting without asking some hopelessly absurd question, in the hope of drawing the good man into a discus-

sion which might interest him. Her reasons for so doing must be given, for this very characteristic trait adds the finishing touch to her portrait.

Mlle. Cormon considered it a duty to talk; not that she was naturally loquacious, for, unfortunately, with her dearth of ideas and very limited stock of phrases, it was difficult to hold forth at any length; but she thought that in this way she was fulfilling the social duties prescribed by religion, which bids us be agreeable to our neighbor. It was a duty which weighed so much upon her mind, that she had submitted this case of conscience out of the *Child's Guide to Manners* to her director, the Abbé Couturier. Whereupon, so far from being disarmed by the penitent's humble admission of the violence of her mental struggles to find something to say, the old ecclesiastic, being firm in matters of discipline, read her a whole chapter out of St. François de Sales on the Duties of a Woman in the World; on the decent gaiety of the pious Christian female, and the duty of confining her austerities to herself; a woman, according to this authority, ought to be amiable in her home and to act in such a sort that her neighbor never feels dull in her company. After this Mlle. Cormon, with a deep sense of duty, was anxious to obey her director at any cost. He had bidden her to discourse agreeably, so every time the conversation languished she felt the perspiration breaking out over her with the violence of her exertions to find something to say which should stimulate the flagging interest. She would come out with odd remarks at such times. Once she revived, with some success, a discussion on the ubiquity of the apostles (of which she understood not a syllable) by the unexpected observation that "You cannot be in two places at once unless you are a bird." With such conversational cues as these, the lady had earned the title of "dear, good Mlle. Cormon" in her set, which phrase, in the mouth of local wits, might be taken to mean that she was as ignorant as a carp, and a bit of a "natural;" but there were plenty of people of her own calibre to take the remark literally, and reply, "Oh yes, Mlle. Cormon is very good."

Sometimes (always in her desire to be agreeable to her guests and fulfil her duties as a hostess) she asked such absurd questions that everybody burst out laughing. She wanted to know, for example, what the Government did with the taxes which it had been receiving all these years; or how it was that the Bible had not been printed in the time of Christ, seeing that it had been written by Moses. Altogether she was on a par with the English country gentleman, and member of the House of Commons, who made the famous speech in which he said, "I am always hearing of Posterity; I should very much like to know what Posterity has done for the country."

On such occasions, the heroic Chevalier de Valois came to the rescue, bringing up all the resources of his wit and tact at the sight of the smiles exchanged by pitiless smatterers. He loved to give to woman, did this elderly noble; he lent his wit to Mlle. Cormon by coming to her assistance with a paradox, and covered her retreat so well, that sometimes it seemed as if she had said nothing foolish. She once owned seriously that she did not know the difference between an ox and a bull. The enchanting Chevalier stopped the roars of laughter by saying that oxen could never be more than uncles to the bullocks. Another time, hearing much talk of cattle-breeding and its difficulties—a topic which often comes up in conversation in the neighborhood of the superb du Pin stud—she so far grasped the technicalities of horse breeding to ask, "Why, if they wanted colts, they did not serve a mare twice a year." The Chevalier drew down the laughter upon himself.

"It is quite possible," said he. The company pricked up their ears.

"The fault lies with the naturalists," he continued; "they have not found out how to breed mares that are less than eleven months in foal."

Poor Mlle. Cormon no more understood the meaning of the words than the difference between the ox and the bull. The Chevalier met with no gratitude for his pains; his chivalrous services were beyond the reach of the lady's comprehension.

She saw that the conversation grew livelier; she was relieved to find that she was not so stupid as she imagined. A day came at last when she settled down in her ignorance, like the Duc de Brancas; and the hero of *Le Distrait,* it may be remembered, made himself so comfortable in the ditch after his fall, that when the people came to pull him out, he asked what they wanted with him. Since a somewhat recent period Mlle. Cormon had lost her fears. She brought out her conversational cues with a self-possession akin to that solemn manner —the very coxcombry of stupidity—which accompanies the fatuous utterances of British patriotism.

As she went with stately steps towards the terrace therefore, she was chewing the cud of reflection, seeking for some question which should draw her uncle out of a silence which always hurt her feelings; she thought that he felt dull.

"Uncle," she began, hanging on his arm, and nestling joyously close to him (for this was another of her make-believes, "If I had a husband, I should do just so!" she thought)— "Uncle, if everything on earth happens by the will of God, there must be a reason for everything."

"Assuredly," the Abbé de Sponde answered gravely. He loved his niece, and submitted with angelic patience to be torn from his meditations.

"Then if I never marry at all, it will be because it is the will of God?"

"Yes, my child."

"But still, as there is nothing to prevent me from marrying to-morrow, my will perhaps might thwart the will of God?"

"That might be so, if we really knew God's will," returned the sub-prior of the Sorbonne. "Remark, my dear, that you insert an *if.*"

Poor Rose was bewildered. She had hoped to lead her uncle to the subject of marriage by way of an argument *ad omnipotentem.* But the naturally obtuse are wont to adopt the remorseless logic of childhood, which is to say, they proceed from the answer to another question, a method frequently found embarrassing.

"But, uncle," she persisted, "God cannot mean women never to marry; for if He did, all of them ought to be either unmarried or married. Their lots are distributed unjustly."

"My child," said the good Abbé, "you are finding fault with the Church, which teaches that celibacy is a more excellent way to God."

"But if the Church was right, and everybody was a good Catholic, there would soon be no more people, uncle."

"You are too ingenious, Rose; there is no need to be so ingenious to be happy."

Such words brought a smile of satisfaction to poor Rose's lips and confirmed her in the good opinion which she began to conceive of herself. Behold how the world, like our friends and enemies, contributes to strengthen our faults. At this moment guests began to arrive, and the conversation was interrupted. On these high festival occasions, the disposition of the rooms brought about little familiarities between the servants and invited guests. Mariette saw the President of the Tribunal, a triple expansion glutton, as he passed by her kitchen.

"Oh, M. du Ronceret, I have been making cauliflower *au gratin* on purpose for you, for mademoiselle knows how fond you are of it. 'Mind you do not fail with it, Mariette,' she said; 'M. le Président is coming.'"

"Good Mlle. Cormon," returned the man of law. "Mariette, did you baste the cauliflowers with gravy instead of stock? It is more savory." And the President did not disdain to enter the council-chamber where Mariette ruled the roast, nor to cast an epicure's eye over her preparations, and give his opinion as a master of the craft.

"Good-day, madame," said Josette, addressing Mme. Granson, who sedulously cultivated the waiting-woman. "Mademoiselle has not forgotten you; you are to have a dish of fish."

As for the Chevalier de Valois, he spoke to Mariette with the jocularity of a great noble unbending to an inferior:

"Well, dear cordon bleu, I would give you the Cross of the Legion of Honor if I could; tell me, is there any dainty morsel for which one ought to save oneself?"

"Yes, yes, M. de Valois, a hare from the Prébaudet; it weighed fourteen pounds!"

"That's a good girl," said the Chevalier, patting Josette on the cheek with two fingers. "Ah! weighs fourteen pounds, does it?"

Du Bousquier was not of the party. Mlle. Cormon treated him hardly, faithful to her system before described. In the very bottom of her heart she felt an inexplicable drawing towards this man of fifty, whom she had once refused. Sometimes she repented of that refusal, and yet she had a presentiment that she should marry him after all, and a dread of him which forbade her to wish for the marriage. These ideas stimulated her interest in du Bousquier. The Republican's herculean proportions produced an effect upon her which she would not admit to herself; and the Chevalier de Valois and Mme. Granson, while they could not explain Mlle. Cormon's inconsistencies, had detected naïve, furtive glances, sufficiently clear in their significance to set them both on the watch to ruin the hopes which du Bousquier clearly entertained in spite of a first check.

Two guests kept the others waiting, but their official duties excused them both. One was M. du Coudrai, registrar of mortgages; the other, M. Choisnel, had once acted as land-steward to the Marquis de Gordes. Choisnel was the notary of the old noblesse, and received everywhere among them with the distinction which his merits deserved; he had besides a not inconsiderable private fortune. When the two late comers arrived, Jacquelin, the man-servant, seeing them turn to go into the drawing-room, came forward with, " 'They' are all in the garden."

The registrar of mortgages was one of the most amiable men in the town. There were but two things against him—he had married an old woman for her money in the first place, and in the second it was his habit to perpetrate outrageous puns, at which he was the first to laugh. But, doubtless, the stomachs of the guests were growing impatient, for at first sight he was hailed with that faint sigh which usually wel-

comes last comers under such circumstances. Pending the official announcement of dinner, the company strolled up and down the terrace by the Brillante, looking out over the stream with its bed of mosaic and its water-plants, at the so picturesque details of the row of houses huddled together on the opposite bank; the old-fashioned wooden balconies, the tumble-down window sills, the balks of timber that shored up a story projecting over the river, the cabinet-maker's workshop, the tiny gardens where odds and ends of clothing were hanging out to dry. It was, in short, the poor quarter of a country town, to which the near neighborhood of the water, a weeping willow drooping over the bank, a rosebush or so, and a few flowers, had lent an indescribable charm, worthy of a landscape painter's brush.

The Chevalier meanwhile was narrowly watching the faces of the guests. He knew that his firebrand had very successfully taken hold of the best coteries in the town; but no one spoke openly of Suzanne and du Bousquier and the great news as yet. The art of distilling scandal is possessed by provincials in a supreme degree. It was felt that the time was not yet ripe for open discussion of the strange event. Every one was bound to go through a private rehearsal first. So it was whispered:

"Have you heard?"

"Yes."

"Du Bousquier?"

"And the fair Suzanne."

"Does Mlle. Cormon know anything?"

"No."

"Ah!"

This was gossip *piano,* presently destined to swell into a *crescendo* when they were ready to discuss the first dish of scandal.

All of a sudden the Chevalier confronted Mme. Granson. That lady had sported her green bonnet, trimmed with auriculas; her face was beaming. Was she simply longing to begin the concert? Such news is as good as a gold-mine to be

worked in the monotonous lives of these people; but the observant and uneasy Chevalier fancied that he read something more in the good lady's expression—to wit, the exultation of self-interest! At once he turned to look at Athanase, and detected in his silence the signs of profound concentration of some kind. In another moment the young man's glance at Mlle. Cormon's figure, which sufficiently resembled a pair of regimental kettledrums, shot a sudden light across the Chevalier's brain. By that gleam he could read the whole past.

"Egad!" he said to himself, "what a slap in the face I have laid myself out to get!"

He went across to offer his arm to Mlle. Cormon, so that he might afterwards take her in to dinner. She regarded the Chevalier with respectful esteem; for, in truth, with his name and position in the aristocratic constellations of the province, he was one of the most brilliant ornaments of her salon. In her heart of hearts, she had longed to be Mme. de Valois at any time during the past twelve years. The name was like a branch for the swarming thoughts of her brain to cling about —he fulfilled all her ideals as to the birth, quality, and externals of an eligible man. But while the Chevalier de Valois was the choice of heart and brain and social ambition, the elderly ruin, curled though he was like a St. John of a procession-day, filled Mlle. Cormon with dismay; the heiress saw nothing but the noble; the woman could not think of him as a husband. The Chevalier's affectation of indifference to marriage, and still more his unimpeachable character in a houseful of work-girls, had seriously injured him, contrary to his own expectations. The man of quality, so clear-sighted in the matter of the annuity, miscalculated on this subject; and Mlle. Cormon herself was not aware that her private reflections upon the too well-conducted Chevalier might have been translated by the remark, "What a pity that he is not a little bit of a rake!"

Students of human nature have remarked these leanings of the saint towards the sinner, and wondered at a taste so little in accordance, as they imagine, with Christian virtue. But, to

At once he turned to look at Athanase

go no further, what nobler destiny for a virtuous woman than the task of cleansing, after the manner of charcoal, the turbid waters of vice? How is it that nobody has seen that these generous creatures, confined by their principles to strict conjugal fidelity, must naturally desire a mate of great practical experience? A reformed rake makes the best husband. And so it came to pass that the poor spinster must sigh over the chosen vessel, offered her as it were in two pieces. Heaven alone could weld the Chevalier de Valois and du Bousquier in one.

If the significance of the few words exchanged between the Chevalier and Mlle. Cormon is to be properly understood, it is necessary to put other matters before the reader. Two very serious questions were dividing Alençon into two camps, and, moreover, du Bousquier was mixed up in both affairs in some mysterious way. The first of these debates concerned the curé. He had taken the oath of allegiance in the time of the Revolution, and now was living down orthodox prejudices by setting an example of the loftiest goodness. He was a Cheverus on a smaller scale, and so much was he appreciated, that when he died the whole town wept for him. Mlle. Cormon and the Abbé de Sponde belonged, however, to the minority, to the Church sublime in its orthodoxy, a section which was to the Court of Rome as the Ultras were shortly to be to the Court of Louis XVIII. The Abbé, in particular, declined to recognize the Church that had submitted to force and made terms with the Constitutionnels. So the curé was never seen in the salon of the Maison Cormon, and the sympathies of its frequenters were with the officiating priest of St. Leonard's, the aristocratic church in Alençon. Du Bousquier, that rabid Liberal under a Royalist's skin, knew how necessary it is to find standards to rally the discontented, who form, as it were, the back-shop of every opposition, and therefore he had already enlisted the sympathies of the trading classes for the curé.

Now for the second affair. The same blunt diplomatist was the secret instigator of a scheme for building a theatre, an idea which had only lately sprouted in Alençon. Du Bous-

quier's zealots knew not their Mahomet, but they were more ardent in their defence of what they believed to be their own plan. Athanase was one of the very hottest of the partisans in favor of the theatre; in the mayor's office for several days past he had been pleading for the cause which all the younger men had taken up.

To return to the Chevalier. He offered his arm to Mlle. Cormon, who thanked him with a radiant glance for this attention. For all answer, the Chevalier indicated Athanase by a meaning look.

"Mademoiselle," he began, "as you have such well-balanced judgment in matters of social convention, and as that young man is related to you in some way——"

"Very distantly," she broke in.

"Ought you not to use the influence which you possess with him and his mother to prevent him from going utterly to the bad? He is not very religious as it is; he defends that perjured priest; but that is nothing. It is a much more serious matter; is he not plunging thoughtlessly into opposition without realizing how his conduct may affect his prospects? He is scheming to build this theatre; he is the dupe of that Republican in disguise, du Bousquier——"

"Dear me, M. de Valois, his mother tells me that he is so clever, and he has not a word to say for himself; he always stands planted before you like a statute——"

"Of limitations," cried the registrar. "I caught that flying.—I present my *devoars* to the Chevalier de Valois," he added, saluting the latter with the exaggeration of Henri Monnier as "Joseph Prudhomme," an admirable type of the class to which M. du Coudrai belonged.

M. de Valois, in return, gave him the abbreviated patronizing nod of a noble standing on his dignity; then he drew Mlle. Cormon further along the terrace by the distance of several flower-pots, to make the registrar understand that he did not wish to be overheard.

Then, lowering his voice, he bent to say in Mlle. Cormon's ear: "How can you expect that lads educated in these de-

testable Imperial Lyceums should have any ideas? Great ideas and a lofty love can only come of right courses and nobleness of life. It is not difficult to foresee, from the look of the poor fellow, that he will be weak in his intellect and come to a miserable end. See how pale and haggard he looks!"

"His mother says that he works far too hard," she replied innocently. "He spends his nights, think of it! in reading books and writing. What good can it possibly do a young man's prospects to sit up writing at night?"

"Why, it exhausts him," said the Chevalier, trying to bring the lady's thoughts back to the point, which was to disgust her with Athanase. "The things that went on in those Imperial Lyceums were something really shocking."

"Oh yes," said the simple lady. "Did they not make them walk out with drums in front? The masters had no more religion than heathens; and they put them in uniform, poor boys, exactly as if they had been soldiers. What notions!"

"And see what comes of it," continued the Chevalier, indicating Athanase. "In my time, where was the young man that could not look a pretty woman in the face? Now, *he* lowers his eyes as soon as he sees you. That young man alarms me, because I am interested in him. Tell him not to intrigue with Bonapartists, as he is doing, to build this theatre; if these little youngsters do not raise an insurrection and demand it (for insurrection and constitution, to my mind, are two words for the same thing), the authorities will build it. And tell his mother to look after him."

"Oh, she will not allow him to see these half-pay people or to keep low company, I am sure. I will speak to him about it," said Mlle. Cormon; "he might lose his situation at the mayor's office. And then what would they do, he and his mother? It makes you shudder."

As M. de Talleyrand said of his wife, so said the Chevalier within himself at that moment, as he looked at the lady:

"If there is a stupider woman, I should like to see her. On the honor of a gentleman, if virtue makes a woman so stupid

as this, is it not a vice? And yet, what an adorable wife she would make for a man of my age! What principle! What ignorance of life!"

Please to bear in mind that these remarks were addressed to the Princess Goritza during the manipulation of a pinch of snuff.

Mme. Granson felt instinctively that the Chevalier was talking of Athanase. In her eagerness to know what he had been saying, she followed Mlle. Cormon, who walked up to the young man in question, putting out six feet of dignity in front; but at that very moment Jacquelin announced that "Mademoiselle was served," and the mistress of the house shot an appealing glance at the Chevalier. But the gallant registrar of mortgages was beginning to see a something in M. de Valois' manner, a glimpse of the barrier which the noblesse were about to raise between themselves and the bourgeoisie; so, delighted with a chance to cut out the Chevalier, he crooked his arm, and Mlle. Cormon was obliged to take it. M. de Valois, from motives of policy, fastened upon Mme. Granson.

"Mlle. Cormon takes the liveliest interest in your dear Athanase, my dear lady," he said, as they slowly followed in the wake of the other guests, "but that interest is falling off through your son's fault. He is lax and Liberal in his opinions; he is agitating for this theatre; he is mixed up with the Bonapartists; he takes the part of the Constitutionnel curé. This line of conduct may cost him his situation. You know how carefully his Majesty's government is weeding the service. If your dear Athanase is once cashiered, where will he find employment? He must not get into bad odor with the authorities."

"Oh, M. le Chevalier," cried the poor startled mother, "what do I not owe you for telling me this! You are right; my boy is a tool in the hands of a bad set; I will open his eyes to his position."

It was long since the Chevalier had sounded Athanase's character at a glance. He saw in the depths of the young man's nature the scarcely malleable material of Republican

convictions; a lad at that age will sacrifice everything for such ideas if he is smitten with the word Liberty, that so vague, so little comprehended word which is like a standard of revolt for those at the bottom of the wheel for whom revolt means revenge. Athanase was sure to stick to his opinions, for he had woven them, with his artist's sorrows and his embittered views of the social framework, into his political creed. He was ready to sacrifice his future at the outset for these opinions, not knowing that he, like all men of real ability, would have seen reason to modify them by the time he reached the age of six-and-thirty, when a man has formed his own conclusions of life, with its intricate relations and interdependences. If Athanase was faithful to the opposition in Alençon, he would fall into disgrace with Mlle. Cormon. Thus far the Chevalier saw clearly.

And so this little town, so peaceful in appearance, was to the full as much agitated internally as any congress of diplomates, when craft and guile and passion and self-interest are met to discuss the weightiest questions between empire and empire.

Meanwhile the guests gathered about the table were eating their way through the first course as people eat in the provinces, without a blush for an honest appetite; whereas, in Paris, it would appear that our jaws are controlled by sumptuary edicts which deliberately set the laws of anatomy at defiance. We eat with the tips of our teeth in Paris, we filch the pleasures of the table, but in the provinces things are taken more naturally; possibly existence centres a little too much about the great and universal method of maintenance to which God condemns all his creatures. It was at the end of the first course that Mlle. Cormon brought out the most celebrated of all her conversational cues; it was talked of for two years afterwards; it is quoted even now, indeed, in the sub-bourgeois strata of Alençon whenever her marriage is under discussion. Over the last entrée but one, the conversation waxed lively and wordy, turning, as might have been expected, upon the affair of the theatre and the curé. In the first enthusiasm

of Royalism in 1816, those extremists, who were afterwards called *les Jésuites du pays,* were for expelling the Abbé François from his cure. M. de Valois suspected du Bousquier of supporting the priest and instigating the intrigues; at any rate, the noble Chevalier piled the burdens on du Bousquier's back with his wonted skill; and du Bousquier, being unrepresented by counsel, was condemned and put in the pillory. Among those present, Athanase was the only person sufficiently frank to stand up for the absent, and he felt that he was not in a position to bring out his ideas before these Alençon magnates, of whose intellects he had the meanest opinion. Only in the provinces nowadays will you find young men keeping a respectful countenance before people of a certain age without daring to have a fling at their elders or to contradict them too flatly. To resume. On the advent of some delicious *canards aux olives,* the conversation first decidedly flagged, and then suddenly dropped dead. Mlle. Cormon, emulous of her own poultry, invented another *canard* in her anxiety to defend du Bousquier, who had been represented as an arch-concocter of intrigue, and a man to set mountains fighting.

"For my own part," said she, "I thought that M. du Bousquier gave his whole attention to childish matters."

Under the circumstances, the epigram produced a tremendous effect. Mlle. Cormon had a great success; she brought the Princess Goritza face downwards on the table. The Chevalier, by no means expecting his Dulcinea to say anything so much to the purpose, could find no words to express his admiration; he applauded after the Italian fashion, noiselessly, with the tips of his fingers.

"She is adorably witty," he said, turning to Mme. Granson. "I have always said that she would unmask her batteries some day."

"But when you know her very well, she is charming," said the widow.

"All women, madame, have *esprit* when you know them well."

When the Homeric laughter subsided, Mlle. Cormon asked

for an explanation of her success. Then the chorus of scandal grew to a height. Du Bousquier was transformed into a bachelor Père Gigogne; it was he who filled the Foundling Hospital; the immorality of his life was laid bare at last; it was all of a piece with his Paris orgies, and so forth and so forth. Led by the Chevalier de Valois, the cleverest of conductors of this kind of orchestra, the overture was something magnificent.

"I do not know," said he, with much indulgence, "what there could possibly be to prevent a du Bousquier from marrying a Mademoiselle Suzanne whatever-it-is—what do you call her?—Suzette! I only know the children by sight, though I lodge with Mme. Lardot. If this Suzon is a tall, fine-looking forward sort of girl with gray eyes, a slender figure, and little feet—I have not paid much attention to these things, but she seemed to me to be very insolent and very much du Bousquier's superior in the matter of manners. Besides, Suzanne has the nobility of beauty; from that point of view, she would certainly make a marriage beneath her. The Emperor Joseph, you know, had the curiosity to go to see the du Barry at Luciennes. He offered her his arm; and when the poor courtesan, overcome by such an honor, hesitated to take it, 'Beauty is always a queen,' said the Emperor. Remark that the Emperor Joseph was an Austrian German," added the Chevalier; "but, believe me, that Germany, which we think of as a very boorish country, is really a land of noble chivalry and fine manners, especially towards Poland and Hungary, where there are——" Here the Chevalier broke off, fearing to make an allusion to his own happy fortune in the past; he only took up his snuff-box and confided the rest to the Princess, who had smiled on him for thirty-six years.

"The speech was delicately considerate for Louis XV.," said du Ronceret.

"But we are talking of the Emperor Joseph, I believe," returned Mlle. Cormon, with a little knowing air.

"Mademoiselle," said the Chevalier, seeing the wicked glances exchanged by the President, the registrar, and the

notary, "Mme. du Barry was Louis Quinze's Suzanne, a fact known well enough to us scapegraces, but which young ladies are not expected to know. Your ignorance shows that the diamond is flawless. The corruptions of history have not so much as touched you."

At this the Abbé de Sponde looked graciously upon M. de Valois and bent his head in laudatory approval.

"Do you not know history, mademoiselle," asked the registrar.

"If you muddle up Louis XV. and Suzanne, how can you expect me to know your history?" was Mlle. Cormon's angelic reply. She was so pleased! The dish was empty and the conversation revived to such purpose that everybody was laughing with their mouths full at her last observation.

"Poor young thing!" said the Abbé de Sponde. "When once trouble comes, that love grown divine called charity is as blind as the pagan love, and should see nothing of the causes of the trouble. You are President of the Maternity Society, Rose; this child will need help; it will not be easy for her to find a husband."

"Poor child!" said Mlle. Cormon.

"Is du Bousquier going to marry her, do you suppose?" asked the President of the Tribunal.

"It would be his duty to do so if he were a decent man," said Mme. Granson; "but, really, my dog has better notions of decency——"

"And yet Azor is a great forager," put in the registrar, trying a joke this time as a change from a pun.

They were still talking of du Bousquier over the dessert. He was the butt of uncounted playful jests, which grew more and more thunder-charged under the influence of wine. Led off by the registrar, they followed up one pun with another. Du Bousquier's character was now ap-parent; he was not a father of the church, nor a reverend father, nor yet a conscript father, and so on and so on, till the Abbé de Sponde said, "In any case, he is not a foster-father," with a gravity that checked the laughter.

"Nor a heavy father," added the Chevalier.

The Church and the aristocracy had descended into the arena of word-play without loss of dignity.

"Hush!" said the registrar, "I can hear du Bousquier's boots creaking; he is in over shoes over boots, and no mistake."

It nearly always happens that when a man's name is in every one's mouth, he is the last to hear what is said of him; the whole town may be talking of him, slandering him or crying him down, and if he has no friends to repeat what other people say of him, he is not likely to hear it. So the blameless du Bousquier, du Bousquier who would fain have been guilty, who wished that Suzanne had not lied to him, was supremely unconscious of all that was taking place. Nobody had spoken to him of Suzanne's revelations; for that matter, everybody thought it indiscreet to ask questions about the affair, when the man most concerned sometimes possesses secrets which compel him to keep silence. So when people adjourned for coffee to the drawing-room, where several evening visitors were already assembled, du Bousquier wore an irresistible and slightly fatuous air.

Mlle. Cormon, counseled by confusion, dared not look towards the terrible seducer. She took possession of Athanase and administered a lecture, bringing out the oddest assortment of the commonplaces of Royalist doctrines and edifying truisms. As the unlucky poet had no snuff-box with a portrait of a princess on the lid to sustain him under the shower-bath of foolish utterances, it was with a vacant expression that he heard his adored lady. His eyes were fixed on that enormous bust, which maintained the absolute repose characteristic of great masses. Desire wrought a kind of intoxication in him. The old maid's thin, shrill voice became low music for his ears; her platitudes were fraught with ideas.

Love is an utterer of false coin; he is always at work transforming common copper into gold louis; sometimes, also, he makes his seeming halfpence of fine gold.

"Well, Athanase, will you promise me?"

The final phrase struck on the young man's ear; he woke with a start from a blissful dream.

"What, mademoiselle?" returned he.

Mlle. Cormon rose abruptly and glanced across at du Bousquier. At that moment he looked like the brawny fabulous deity whose likeness you behold upon Republican three-franc pieces. She went over to Mme. Granson and said in a confidential tone:

"Your son is weak in his intellect, my poor friend. That lyceum has been the ruin of him," she added, recollecting how the Chevalier de Valois had insisted on the bad education given in those institutions.

Here was a thunderbolt! Poor Athanase had had his chance of flinging fire upon the dried stems heaped up in the old maid's heart, and he had not known it! If he had but listened to her, he might have made her understand; for in Mlle. Cormon's present highly-wrought mood a word would have been enough, but the very force of the stupefying cravings of love-sick youth had spoiled his chances; so sometimes a child full of life kills himself through ignorance.

"What can you have been saying to Mlle. Cormon?" asked his mother.

"Nothing."

"Nothing?—I will have this cleared up," she said, and put off serious business to the morrow; du Bousquier was hopelessly lost, she thought, and the speech troubled her very little.

Soon the four card-tables received their complement of players. Four persons sat down to piquet, the most expensive amusement of the evening, over which a good deal of money changed hands. M. Choisnel, the attorney for the crown, and a couple of ladies went to the red-lacquered cabinet for a game of tric-trac. The candles in the wall-sconces were lighted, and then the flower of Mlle. Cormon's set blossomed out about the fire, on the settees, and about the tables. Each new couple, on entering the room, made the same remark to Mlle. Cormon, "So you are going to the Prébaudet to-morrow?"

"Yes, I really must," she said, in answer to each.

All through the evening the hostess wore a preoccupied air. Mme. Granson was the first to see that she was not at all like herself. Mlle. Cormon was thinking.

"What are you thinking about, cousin?" Mme. Granson asked at last, finding her sitting in the boudoir.

"I am thinking of that poor girl. Am I not patroness of the Maternity Society? I will go now to find ten crowns for you."

"*Ten crowns!*" exclaimed Mme. Granson. "Why, you have never given so much to any one before!"

"But, my dear, it is so natural to have a child."

This improper cry from the heart struck the treasurer of the Maternity Society dumb from sheer astonishment. Du Bousquier had actually gone up in Mlle. Cormon's opinion!

"Really," began Mme. Granson, "du Bousquier is not merely a monster—he is a villain into the bargain. When a man has spoiled somebody else's life, it is his duty surely to make amends. It should be his part rather than ours to rescue this young person; and when all comes to all, she is a bad girl, it seems to me, for there are better men in Alençon than that cynic of a du Bousquier. A girl must be shameless indeed to have anything to do with him."

"Cynic? Your son, dear, teaches you Latin words that are quite beyond me. Certainly I do not want to make excuses for M. du Bousquier; but explain to me why it is immoral for a woman to prefer one man to another?"

"Dear cousin, suppose now that you were to marry my Athanase; there would be nothing but what was very natural in that. He is young and good-looking; he has a future before him; Alençon will be proud of him some day. But—every one would think that you took such a young man as your husband for the sake of greater conjugal felicity. Slanderous tongues would say that you were making a sufficient provision of bliss for yourself. There would be jealous women to bring charges of depravity against you. But what would it matter to you? You would be dearly loved—loved sincerely. If

Athanase seemed to you to be weak of intellect, my dear, it is because he has too many ideas. Extremes meet. He is as clean in his life as a girl of fifteen; *he* has not wallowed in the pollutions of Paris. . . . Well, now, change the terms, as my poor husband used to say. It is relatively just the same situation as du Bousquier's and Suzanne's. But what would be slander in your case is true in every way of du Bousquier. Now do you understand?"

"No more than if you were talking Greek," said Rose Cormon, opening wide eyes and exerting all the powers of her understanding.

"Well, then, cousin, since one must put dots on all the *i*'s, it is quite out of the question that Suzanne should love du Bousquier. And when the heart counts for nothing in such an affair——"

"Why, really, cousin, how should people love if not with their hearts?"

At this Mme. Granson thought within herself, as the Chevalier had thought:

"The poor cousin is too innocent by far. This goes beyond the permissible——" Aloud she said, "Dear girl, it seems to me that a child is not conceived of spirit alone."

"Why, yes, dear, for the Holy Virgin——"

"But, my dear, good girl, du Bousquier is not the Holy Ghost."

"That is true," returned the spinster; "he is a man—a man dangerous enough for his friends to recommend him strongly to marry."

"You, cousin, might bring that about——"

"Oh, how?" cried the spinster, with a glow of Christian charity.

"Decline to receive him until he takes a wife. For the sake of religion and morality, you ought to make an example of him under the circumstances."

"We will talk of this again, dear Mme. Granson, when I come back from the Prébaudet. I will ask advice of my uncle and the Abbé Couturier," and Mlle. Cormon went back to

the large drawing-room. The liveliest hour of the evening had begun.

The lights, the groups of well-dressed women, the serious and magisterial air of the assembly, filled Mlle. Cormon with pride in the aristocratic appearance of the rooms, a pride in which her guests all shared. There were plenty of people who thought that the finest company of Paris itself was no finer. At that moment du Bousquier, playing a rubber with M. de Valois and two elderly ladies, Mme. du Coudrai and Mme. du Ronceret, was the object of suppressed curiosity. Several women came up on the pretext of watching the game, and gave him such odd, albeit furtive, glances that the old bachelor at last began to think that there must be something amiss with his appearance.

"Can it be that my toupet is askew?" he asked himself. And he felt that all-absorbing uneasiness to which the elderly bachelor is peculiarly subject. A blunder gave him an excuse for leaving the table at the end of the seventh rubber.

"I cannot touch a card but I lose," he said; "I am decidedly too unlucky at cards."

"You are lucky in other respects," said the Chevalier, with a knowing look. Naturally, the joke made the round of the room, and every one exclaimed over the exquisite breeding shown by the Prince Talleyrand of Alençon.

"There is no one like M. de Valois for saying such things," said the niece of the curé of St. Leonard's.

Du Bousquier went up to the narrow mirror above "The Deserter," but he could detect nothing unusual.

Towards ten o'clock, after innumerable repetitions of the same phrase with every possible variation, the long antechamber began to fill with visitors preparing to embark; Mlle. Cormon convoying a few favored guests as far as the *perron* for a farewell embrace. Knots of guests took their departure, some in the direction of the Brittany road and the château, and others turning toward the quarter by the Sarthe. And then began the exchange of remarks with which the streets had echoed at the same hour for a score of years. There was the inevitable, "Mlle. Cormon looked very well this evening."

"Mlle. Cormon? She looked strange, I thought."

"How the Abbé stoops, poor man! And how he goes to sleep—did you see? He never knows where the cards are now; his mind wanders."

"We shall be very sorry to lose him."

"It is a fine night. We shall have a fine day to-morrow."

"Fine weather for the apples to set."

"You beat us to-night; you always do when M. de Valois is your partner."

"Then how much did he win?"

"To-night? Why, he won three or four francs. He never loses."

"Faith, no. There are three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, you know; at that rate, whist is as good as a farm for him."

"Oh! what bad luck we had to-night!"

"You are very fortunate, monsieur and madame, here you are at your own doorstep, while we have half the town to cross."

"I do not pity you; you could keep a carriage if you liked, you need not go afoot."

"Ah! monsieur, we have a daughter to marry (that means one wheel), and a son to keep in Paris, and that takes the other."

"Are you still determined to make a magistrate of him?"

"What can one do? You must do something with a boy, and besides, it is no disgrace to serve the King."

Sometimes a discussion on cider or flax was continued on the way, the very same things being said at the same season year after year. If any observer of human nature had lived in that particular street, their conversation would have supplied him with an almanac. At this moment, however, the talk was of a decidedly Rabelaisian turn; for du Bousquier, walking on ahead by himself, was humming the well-known tune *"Femme sensible, entends-tu le ramage?"* without a suspicion of its appropriateness. Some of the party held that du Bousquier was uncommonly long-headed, and that people

judged him unjustly. President du Ronceret inclined towards this view since he had been confirmed in his post by a new royal decree. The rest regarded the forage-contractor as a dangerous man of lax morals, of whom anything might be expected. In the provinces, as in Paris, public men are very much in the position of the statue in Addison's ingenious fable. The statue was erected at a place where four roads met; two cavaliers coming up on opposite sides declared, the one that it was white, the other that it was black, until they came to blows, and both of them lying on the ground discovered that it was black on one side and white on the other, while a third cavalier coming up to their assistance affirmed that it was red.

When the Chevalier de Valois reached home, he said to himself: "It is time to spread a report that I am going to marry Mlle. Cormon. The news shall come from the d'Esgrignon's salon; it shall go straight to the Bishop's palace at Séez and come back through one of the vicars-general to the curé of St. Leonard's. He will not fail to tell the Abbé Couturier, and in this way Mlle. Cormon will receive the shot well under the water-line. The old Marquis d'Esgrignon is sure to ask the Abbé de Sponde to dinner to put a stop to gossip which might injure Mlle. Cormon if I fail to come forward; or me, if she refuses me. The Abbé shall be well and duly entangled; and after a call from Mlle. de Gordes, in the course of which the grandeur and the prospects of the alliance will be put before Mlle. Cormon, she is not likely to hold out. The Abbé will leave her more than a hundred thousand crowns; and as for her, she must have put by more than a hundred thousand livres by this time; she has her house, the Prébaudet, and some fifteen thousand livres per annum. One word to my friend the Comte de Fontaine, and I am Mayor of Alençon, and deputy; then, once seated on the right-hand benches, the way to a peerage is cleared by a well-timed cry of 'Clôture,' or 'Order.'"

When Mme. Granson reached home, she had a warm explanation with her son. He could not be made to understand

the connection between his political opinions and his love. It was the first quarrel which had troubled the peace of the poor little household.

Next morning, at nine o'clock, Mlle. Cormon, packed into the cariole with Josette by her side, drove up the Rue Saint-Blaise on her way to the Prébaudet, looking like a pyramid above an ocean of packages. And the event which was to surprise her there and hasten on her marriage was unseen as yet by Mme. Granson, or du Bousquier, or M. de Valois, or by Mlle. Cormon herself. Chance is the greatest artist of all.

On the morrow of mademoiselle's arrival at the Prébaudet, she was very harmlessly engaged in taking her eight o'clock breakfast, while she listened to the reports of her bailiff and gardener, when Jacquelin, in a great flurry, burst into the dining-room.

"Mademoiselle," cried he, "M. l'Abbé has sent an express messenger to you; that boy of Mother Grosmort's has come with a letter. The lad left Alençon before daybreak, and yet here he is! He came almost as fast as Penelope. Ought he to have a glass of wine?"

"What can have happened, Josette? Can uncle be——"

"He would not have written if he was," said the woman, guessing her mistress' fears.

Mlle. Cormon glanced over the first few lines.

"Quick! quick!" she cried. "Tell Jacquelin to put Penelope in.—Get ready, child, have everything packed in half an hour, we are going back to town," she added, turning to Josette.

"Jacquelin!" called Josette, excited by the expression of Mlle. Cormon's face. Jacquelin on receiving his orders came back to the house to expostulate.

"But, mademoiselle, Penelope has only just been fed."

"Eh! what does that matter to me? I want to start this moment."

"But, mademoiselle, it is going to rain."

"Very well. We shall be wet through."

"The house is on fire," muttered Josette, vexed because her mistress said nothing, but read her letter through to the end, and then began again at the beginning.

"Just finish your coffee at any rate. Don't upset yourself! See how red you are in the face."

"Red in the face, Josette!" exclaimed Mlle. Cormon, going up to the mirror; and as the quick-silvered sheet had come away from the glass, she beheld her countenance doubly distorted. "Oh, dear!" she thought, "I shall look ugly!—Come, come, Josette, child, help me to dress. I want to be ready before Jacquelin puts Penelope in. If you cannot put all the things into the chaise, I would rather leave them here than lose a minute."

If you have fully comprehended the degree of monomania to which Mlle. Cormon had been driven by her desire to marry, you will share her excitement. Her worthy uncle informed her that M. de Troisville, a retired soldier from the Russian service, the grandson of one of his best friends, wishing to settle down in Alençon, had asked for his hospitality for the sake of the Abbé's old friendship with the mayor, his grandfather, the Vicomte de Troisville of the reign of Louis XV. M. de Sponde, in alarm, begged his niece to come home at once to help him to entertain the guest and to do the honors of the house; for as there had been some delay in forwarding the letter, M. de Troisville might be expected to drop in upon him that very evening.

How was it possible after reading that letter to give any attention to affairs at the Prébaudet? The tenant and the bailiff, beholding their mistress' dismay, lay low and waited for orders. When they stopped her passage to ask for instructions, Mlle. Cormon, the despotic old maid, who saw to everything herself at the Prébaudet, answered them with an "As you please," which struck them dumb with amazement. This was the mistress who carried administrative zeal to such lengths that she counted the fruit and entered it under headings, so that she could regulate the consumption by the quantity of each sort!

"I must be dreaming, I think," said Josette, when she saw her mistress flying upstairs like some elephant on which God should have bestowed wings.

In a little while, in spite of the pelting rain, mademoiselle was driving away from the Prébaudet, leaving her people to have things all their own way. Jacquelin dared not take it upon himself to drive the placid Penelope any faster than her usual jog-trot pace; and the old mare, something like the fair queen after whom she was named, seemed to take a step back for every step forward. Beholding this, mademoiselle bade Jacquelin, in a vinegar voice, to urge the poor astonished beast to a gallop, and to use the whip if necessary, so appalling was the thought that M. de Troisville might arrive before the house was ready for him. A grandson of an old friend of her uncle's could not be much over forty, she thought; a military man must infallibly be a bachelor. She vowed inwardly that, with her uncle's help, M. de Troisville should not depart in the estate in which he entered the Maison Cormon. Penelope galloped; but mademoiselle, absorbed in dresses and dreams of a wedding night, told Jacquelin again and again that he was standing still. She fidgeted in her seat, without vouchsafing any answer to Josette's questions, and talked to herself as if she were revolving mighty matters in her mind.

At last the cariole turned into the long street of Alençon, known as the Rue Saint-Blaise if you come in on the side of Mortagne, the Rue de la Porte de Séez by the time you reach the sign of the *Three Moors,* and lastly as the Rue du Bercail, when it finally debouches into the highroad into Brittany. If Mlle. Cormon's departure for the Prébaudet made a great noise in Alençon, anybody can imagine the hubbub caused by her return on the following day, with the driving rain lashing her face. Everybody remarked Penelope's furious pace, Jacquelin's sly looks, the earliness of the hour, the bundles piled up topsy-turvy, the lively conversation between mistress and maid, and, more than all things, the impatience of the party.

The Troisville estates lay between Alençon and Mortagne. Josette, therefore, knew about the different branches of the family. A word let fall by her mistress just as they reached the *pavé* of Alençon put Josette in possession of the facts, and a discussion sprang up, in the course of which the two women settled between themselves that the expected guest must be a man of forty or forty-two, a bachelor, neither rich nor poor. Mademoiselle saw herself Vicomtesse de Troisville.

"And here is uncle telling me nothing, knowing nothing, and wanting to know nothing! Oh, so like uncle! He would forget his nose if it was not fastened to his face."

Have you not noticed how mature spinsters, under these circumstances, grow as intelligent, fierce, bold, and full of promises as a Richard III.? To them, as to clerics in liquor, nothing is sacred.

In one moment, from the upper end of the Rue Saint-Blaise to the Porte de Séez, the town of Alençon heard of Mlle. Cormon's return with aggravating circumstances, heard with a mighty perturbation of its vitals and trouble of the organs of life public and domestic. Cook-maids, shopkeepers, and passers-by carried the news from door to door; then, without delay, it circulated in the upper spheres, and almost simultaneously the words, "Mlle. Cormon has come back," exploded like a bomb in every house.

Meanwhile Jacquelin climbed down from his wooden bench in front, polished by some process unknown to cabinet-makers, and with his own hands opened the great gates with the rounded tops. They were closed in Mlle. Cormon's absence as a sign of mourning; for when she went away her house was shut up, and the faithful took it in turn to show hospitality to the Abbé de Sponde. (M. de Valois used to pay his debt by an invitation to dine at the Marquis d'Esgrignon's.) Jacquelin gave the familiar call to Penelope standing in the middle of the road; and the animal, accustomed to this manœuvre, turned into the courtyard, steering clear of the flower-bed, till Jacquelin took the bridle and

walked round with the chaise to the steps before the door.

"Mariette!" called Mlle. Cormon.

"Mademoiselle?" returned Mariette, engaged in shutting the gates.

"Has the gentleman come?"

"No, mademoiselle."

"And is my uncle here?"

"He is at the church, mademoiselle."

Jacquelin and Josette were standing on the lowest step of the flight, holding out their hands to steady their mistress' descent from the cariole; she, meanwhile, had hoisted herself upon the shaft, and was clutching at the curtains, before springing down into their arms. It was two years since she had dared to trust herself upon the iron step of double strength, secured to the shaft by a fearfully made contrivance with huge bolts.

From the height of the steps, mademoiselle surveyed her courtyard with an air of satisfaction.

"There, there, Mariette, let the great gate alone and come here."

"There is something up," Jacquelin said to Mariette as she came past the chaise.

"Let us see now, child, what is there in the house?" said Mlle. Cormon, collapsing on the bench in the long antechamber as if she were exhausted.

"Just nothing at all," replied Mariette, hands on hips. "Mademoiselle knows quite well that M. l'Abbé always dines out when she is not at home; yesterday I went to bring him back from Mlle. Armande's."

"Then where is he?"

"M. l'Abbé? He is gone to church; he will not be back till three o'clock."

"Uncle thinks of nothing! Why couldn't he have sent you to market? Go down now, Mariette, and, without throwing money away, spare for nothing, get the best, finest, and daintiest of everything. Go to the coach office and ask where

people send orders for pâtés. And I want cray-fish from the brooks along the Brillante. What time is it?"

"Nine o'clock all but a quarter."

"Oh dear, oh dear; don't lose any time in chattering, Mariette. The visitor my uncle is expecting may come at any moment; pretty figures we should cut if he comes to breakfast."

Mariette, turning round, saw Penelope in a lather, and gave Jacquelin a glance which said, "Mademoiselle means to put her hand on a husband this time."

Mlle. Cormon turned to her housemaid. "Now, it is our turn, Josette; we must make arrangements for M. de Troisville to sleep here to-night."

How gladly those words were uttered! "We must arrange for M. de Troisville" (pronounced Tréville) "to sleep here to-night!" How much lay in those few words! Hope poured like a flood through the old maid's soul.

"Will you put him in the green chamber?"

"The Bishop's room? No," said mademoiselle, "it is too near mine. It is very well for his Lordship, a holy man."

"Give him your uncle's room."

"It looks so bare; it would not do."

"Lord, mademoiselle, you could have a bed put up in the boudoir in a brace of shakes; there is a fireplace there. Moreau will be sure to find a bedstead in his warehouse that will match the hangings as nearly as possible."

"You are right, Josette. Very well; run round to Moreau's and ask his advice about everything necessary; I give you authority. If the bed, M. de Troisville's bed, can be set up by this evening, so that M. de Troisville shall notice nothing, supposing that M. de Troisville should happen to come in while Moreau is here, I am quite willing. If Moreau cannot promise that, M. de Troisville shall sleep in the green chamber, although M. de Troisville will be very near me."

Josette departed; her mistress called her back.

"Tell Jacquelin all about it," she exclaimed in a stern and awful voice; "let *him* go to Moreau. How about my dress?

Suppose M. de Troisville came and caught me like this, without uncle here to receive him!—Oh, uncle! uncle!—Come Josette, you shall help me to dress."

"But how about Penelope?" the woman began imprudently. Mlle. Cormon's eyes shot sparks for the first and last time in her life.

"It is always Penelope! Penelope this, Penelope that! Is Penelope mistress here?"

"She is all of a lather, and she has not been fed."

"Eh! and if she dies, let her die!——" cried Mlle. Cormon —"so long as I am married," she added in her own mind.

Josette stood stockstill a moment in amazement, such a remark was tantamount to murder; then, at a sign from her mistress, she dashed headlong down the steps into the yard.

"Mademoiselle is possessed, Jacquelin!" were Josette's first words.

And in this way, everything that occurred throughout the day led up to the great climax which was to change the whole course of Mlle. Cormon's life. The town was already turned upside down by five aggravating circumstances which attended the lady's sudden return, to wit—the pouring rain; Penelope's panting pace and sunk flanks covered with foam; the earliness of the hour; the untidy bundles; and the spinster's strange, sacred looks. But when Mariette invaded the market to carry off everything that she could lay her hands on; when Jacquelin went to inquire for a bedstead of the principal upholsterer in the Rue Porte de Séez, close by the church; here, indeed, was material on which to build the gravest conjecture! The strange event was discussed on the Parade and the Promenade; every one was full of it, not excepting Mlle. Armande, on whom the Chevalier de Valois happened to be calling at the time.

Only two days ago Alençon had been stirred to its depths by occurrences of such capital importance, that worthy matrons were still exclaiming that it was like the end of the world! And now, this last news was summed up in all houses by the inquiry, "What can be happening at the Cormons'?"

The Abbé de Sponde, skilfully questioned when he emerged from St. Leonard's to take a walk with the Abbé Couturier along the Parade, made reply in the simplicity of his heart, to the effect that he expected a visit from the Vicomte de Troisville, who had been in the Russian service during the Emigration, and now was coming back to settle in Alençon. A kind of labial telegraph, at work that afternoon between two and five o'clock, informed all the inhabitants of Alençon that Mlle. Cormon at last had found herself a husband by advertisement. She was going to marry the Vicomte de Troisville. Some said that "Moreau was at work on a bedstead already." In some places the bed was six feet long. It was only four feet at Mme. Granson's house in the Rue du Bercail. At President du Ronceret's, where du Bousquier was dining, it dwindled into a sofa. The tradespeople said that it cost eleven hundred francs. It was generally thought that this was like counting your chickens before they were hatched.

Further away, it was said that the price of carp had gone up. Mariette had swooped down upon the market and created a general scarcity. Penelope had dropped down at the upper end of the Rue Saint-Blaise; the death was called in question at the receiver-general's; nevertheless at the prefecture it was known for a fact that the animal fell dead just as she turned in at the gate of the Hôtel Cormon, so swiftly had the old maid come down upon her prey. The saddler at the corner of the Rue de Séez, in his anxiety to know the truth about Penelope, was hardy enough to call in to ask if anything had happened to Mlle. Cormon's chaise. Then from the utmost end of the Rue Saint-Blaise, to the furthermost parts of the Rue du Bercail, it was known that, thanks to Jacquelin's care, Penelope, dumb victim of her mistress' intemperate haste, was still alive, but she seemed to be in a bad way.

All along the Brittany road the Vicomte de Troisville was a penniless younger son, for the domains of Perche belonged to the Marquis of that ilk, a peer of France with two children.

The match was a lucky thing for an impoverished émigré; as for the Vicomte himself, that was Mlle. Cormon's affair. Altogether the match received the approval of the aristocratic section on the Brittany road; Mlle. Cormon could not have put her fortune to a better use.

Among the bourgeoisie, on the other hand, the Vicomte de Troisville was a Russian general that had borne arms against France. He was bringing back a large fortune made at the court of St. Petersburg. He was a "foreigner," one of the "Allies" detested by the Liberals. The Abbé de Sponde had manœuvred the match on the sly. Every person who had any shadow of a right of entrance to Mlle. Cormon's drawing-room vowed to be there that night.

While the excitement went through the town, and all but put Suzanne out of people's heads, Mlle. Cormon herself was not less excited; she felt as she had never felt before. She looked round the drawing-room, the boudoir, the cabinet, the dining-room, and a dreadful apprehension seized upon her. Some mocking demon seemed to show her the old-fashioned splendor in a new light; the beautiful furniture, admired ever since she was a child, was suspected, nay, convicted, of being out of date. She was shaken, in fact, by the dread that catches almost every author by the throat when he begins to read his own work aloud to some exigent or jaded critic. Before he began, it was perfect in his eyes; now the novel situations are stale; the finest periods turned with such secret relish are turgid or halting; the metaphors are mixed or grotesque; his sins stare him in the face. Even so, poor Mlle. Cormon shivered to think of the smile on M. de Troisville's lips when he looked round that salon, which looked like a Bishop's drawing-room, unchanged for one possessor after another. She dreaded his cool survey of the ancient dining-room; in short, she was afraid that the picture might look the older for the ancient frame. How if all these old things should tinge her with their age? The bare thought of it made her flesh creep. At that moment she would have given one-fourth of her savings for the power of renovating her

house at a stroke of a magic wand. Where is the general so conceited that he will not shudder on the eve of an action? She, poor thing, was between an Austerlitz and a Waterloo.

"Mme. la Vicomtesse de Troisville," she said to herself, "what a fine name! Our estates will pass to a good house, at any rate."

Her excitement fretted her. It sent a thrill through every fibre of every nerve to the least of the ramifications and the papillæ so well wadded with flesh. Hope tingling in her veins set all the blood in her body in circulation. She felt capable, if need was, of conversing with M. de Troisville.

Of the activity with which Josette, Mariette, Jacquelin, Moreau, and his assistants set about their work, it is needless to speak. Ants rescuing their eggs could not have been busier than they. Everything, kept so neat and clean with daily care, was starched and ironed, scrubbed, washed, and polished. The best china saw the light. Linen damask cloths and serviettes docketed A B C D emerged from the depths where they lay shrouded in triple wrappings and defended by bristling rows of pins. The rarest shelves of that oak-bound library were made to give account of their contents; and finally, mademoiselle offered up three bottles of liqueurs to the coming guest, three bottles bearing the label of the most famous distiller of over-sea—Mme. Amphoux, name dear to connoisseurs.

Mlle. Cormon was ready for battle, thanks to the devotion of her lieutenants. The munitions of war, the heavy artillery of the kitchen, the batteries of the pantry, the victuals, provisions for the attack, and body of reserves, had all been brought up in array. Orders were issued to Jacquelin, Mariette, and Josette to wear their best clothes. The garden was raked over. Mademoiselle only regretted that she could not come to an understanding with the nightingales in the trees, that they might warble their sweetest songs for the occasion. At length, at four o'clock, just as

the Abbé came in, and mademoiselle was beginning to think that she had brought out her daintiest linen and china and made ready the most exquisite of dinners in vain, the crack of a postilion's whip sounded outside in the Val-Noble.

"It is *he!*" she thought, and the lash of the whip struck her in the heart.

And indeed, heralded by all this tittle-tattle, a certain post-chaise, with a single gentleman inside it, had made such a prodigious sensation as it drove down the Rue Saint-Blaise and turned into the Rue du Cours, that several small urchins and older persons gave chase to the vehicle, and now were standing in a group about the gateway of the Hôtel Cormon to watch the postilion drive in. Jacquelin, feeling that his own marriage was in the wind, had also heard the crack of the whip, and was out in the yard to throw open the gates. The postilion (an acquaintance) was on his mettle, he turned the corner to admiration, and came to a stand before the flight of steps. And, as you can understand, he did not go until Jacquelin had duly and properly made him tipsy.

The Abbé came out to meet his guest, and in a trice the chaise was despoiled of its occupant, robbers in a hurry could not have done their work more nimbly; then the chaise was put into the coach-house, the great door was closed, and in a few minutes there was not a sign of M. de Troisville's arrival. Never did two chemicals combine with a greater alacrity than that displayed by the house of Cormon to absorb the Vicomte de Troisville. As for mademoiselle, if she had been a lizard caught by a shepherd, her heart could not have beat faster. She sat heroically in her low chair by the fireside; Josette threw open the door, and the Vicomte de Troisville, followed by the Abbé de Sponde, appeared before her.

"This is M. le Vicomte de Troisville, niece, a grandson of an old school-fellow of mine.—M. de Troisville, my niece, Mlle. Cormon."

"Dear uncle, how nicely he puts it," thought Rose Marie Victoire.

The Vicomte de Troisville, to describe him in a few words,

was a du Bousquier of noble family. Between the two men there was just that difference which separates the gentleman from the ordinary man. If they had been standing side by side, even the most furious Radical could not have denied the signs of race about the Vicomte. There was all the distinction of refinement about his strength, his figure had lost nothing of its magnificent dignity. Blue-eyed, dark-haired, and olive-skinned, he could not have been more than six-and-forty. You might have thought him a handsome Spaniard preserved in Russian ice. His manner, gait, and bearing, and everything about him, suggested a diplomate, and a diplomate that has seen Europe. He looked like a gentleman in his traveling dress.

M. de Troisville seemed to be tired. The Abbé rose to conduct him to his room, and was overcome with astonishment when Rose opened the door of the boudoir, now transformed into a bedroom. Then uncle and niece left the noble visitor leisure to attend to his toilet with the help of Jacquelin, who brought him all the luggage which he needed. While M. de Troisville was dressing, they walked on the terrace by the Brillante. The Abbé, by a strange chance, was more absent-minded than usual, and Mlle. Cormon no less preoccupied, so they paced to and fro in silence. Never in her life had Mlle. Cormon seen so attractive a man as this Olympian Vicomte. She could not say to herself, like a German girl, "I have found my Ideal!" but she felt that she was in love from head to foot. "The very thing for me," she thought. On a sudden she fled to Mariette, to know whether dinner could be put back a little without serious injury.

"Uncle, this M. de Troisville is very pleasant," she said when she came back again.

"Why, my girl, he has not said a word as yet," returned the Abbé, laughing.

"But one can tell by his general appearance. Is he a bachelor?"

"I know nothing about it," replied her uncle, his thoughts full of that afternoon's discussion with the Abbé Couturier

on Divine Grace. "M. de Troisville said in his letter that he wanted to buy a house here.—If he were married, he would not have come alone," he added carelessly. It never entered his head that his niece could think of marriage for herself.

"Is he rich?"

"He is the younger son of a younger branch. His grandfather held a major's commission, but this young man's father made a foolish marriage."

"Young man!" repeated his niece. "Why, he is quite five-and-forty, uncle, it seems to me." She felt an uncontrollable desire to compare his age with hers.

"Yes," said the Abbé. "But to a poor priest at seventy a man of forty seems young, Rose."

By this time all Alençon knew that M. le Vicomte de Troisville had arrived at the Hôtel Cormon.

The visitor very soon rejoined his host and hostess, and began to admire the view of the Brillante, the garden, and the house.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," he said, "to find such a place as this would be the height of my ambition."

The old maid wished to read a declaration in the speech. She lowered her eyes.

"You must be very fond of it, mademoiselle," continued the Vicomte.

"How could I help being fond of it? It has been in our family since 1574, when one of our ancestors, an Intendant of the Duchy of Alençon, bought the ground and built the house. It is laid on piles."

Jacquelin having announced that dinner was ready, M. de Troisville offered his arm. The radiant spinster tried not to lean too heavily upon him; she was still afraid that he might think her forward.

"Everything is quite in harmony here," remarked the Vicomte as they sat down to table.

"Yes, the trees in our garden are full of birds that give us music for nothing. Nobody molests them; the nightingales sing there every night," said Mlle. Cormon.

"I am speaking of the inside of the house," remarked the Vicomte; he had not troubled himself to study his hostess particularly, and was quite unaware of her vacuity.—"Yes, everything contributes to the general effect; the tones of color, the furniture, the character of the house," added he, addressing Mlle. Cormon.

"It costs a great deal, though," replied that excellent spinster, "the rates are something enormous." The word "contribute" had impressed itself on her mind.

"Ah! then are the rates high here?" asked the Vicomte, too full of his own ideas to notice the absurd *non sequitur*.

"I do not know," said the Abbé. "My niece manages her own property and mine."

"The rates are a mere trifle if people are well-to-do," struck in Mlle. Cormon, anxious not to appear stingy. "As to the furniture, I leave things as they are. I shall never make any changes here; at least I shall not, unless I marry, and in that case everything in the house must be arranged to suit the master's taste."

"You are for great principles, mademoiselle," smiled the Vicomte; "somebody will be a lucky man."

"Nobody ever made me such a pretty speech before," thought Mlle. Cormon.

The Vicomte complimented his hostess upon the appointments of the table and the housekeeping, admitting that he thought that the provinces were behind the times, and found himself in most delectable quarters.

"*Delectable,* good Lord! what does it mean?" thought she. "Where is the Chevalier de Valois to reply to him? De-lectable? Is it made up of several words? There! courage; perhaps it is Russian, and if so I am not obliged to say anything."—Then she added aloud, her tongue unloosed by an eloquence which almost every human creature can find in a great crisis—"We have the most brilliant society here, Monsieur le Vicomte. You will be able to judge for yourself, for it assembles in this very house; on some of our acquaint-

ances we can always count; they will have heard of my return no doubt, and will be sure to come to see me. There is the Chevalier de Valois, a gentleman of the old court, a man of infinite wit and taste; then there is M. le Marquis d'Esgrignon and Mlle. Armande, his sister"—she bit her lip and changed her mind—"a—a remarkable woman in her way. She refused all offers of marriage so as to leave her fortune to her brother and his son."

"Ah! yes; the d'Esgrignons, I remember them," said the Vicomte.

"Alençon is very gay," pursued mademoiselle, now that she had fairly started off. "There is so much going on; the Receiver-General gives dances; the Prefect is a very pleasant man; his lordship the Bishop occasionally honors us with a visit——"

"Come!" said the Vicomte, smiling as he spoke, "I have done well, it seems, to come creeping back like a hare (*un lièvre*) to die in my form."

"It is the same with me," replied mademoiselle; "I am like a creeper (*le lierre*), I must cling to something or die."

The Vicomte took the saying thus twisted for a joke, and smiled.

"Ah!" thought his hostess, "that is all right, *he* understands me."

The conversation was kept up upon generalities. Under pressure of a strong desire to please, the strange, mysterious, indefinable workings of consciousness brought all the Chevalier de Valois' tricks of speech uppermost in Mlle. Cormon's brain. It fell out, as it sometimes does in a duel, when the Devil himself seems to take aim; and never did duelist hit his man more fairly and squarely than the old maid. The Vicomte de Troisville was too well mannered to praise the excellent dinner, but his silence was panegyric in itself! As he drank the delicious wines with which Jacquelin plied him, he seemed to be meeting old friends with the liveliest pleasure; for your true amateur does not applaud, he enjoys. He informed himself curiously of the prices of land.

houses, and sites; he drew from mademoiselle a long description of the property between the Brillante and the Sarthe. He was amazed that the town and the river lay so far apart, and showed the greatest interest in local topography. The Abbé sat silent, leaving all the conversation to his niece. And, in truth, mademoiselle considered that she interested M. de Troisville; he smiled graciously at her, he made far more progress with her in the course of a single dinner than the most ardent of her former wooers in a whole fortnight. For which reasons, you may be certain that never was guest so cosseted, so lapped about with small attentions and observances. He might have been a much loved lover, new come home to the house of which he was the delight.

Mademoiselle forestalled his wants. She saw when he needed bread, her eyes brooded over him; if he turned his head, she adroitly supplemented his portion of any dish which he seemed to like; if he had been a glutton, she would have killed him. What a delicious earnest of all that she counted upon doing for her lover! She made no silly blunders of self-depreciation this time! She went gallantly forward, full sail, and all flags flying; posed as the queen of Alençon, and vaunted her preserves. Indeed, she fished for compliments, talking about herself as if her trumpeter were dead. And she saw that she pleased the Vicomte, for her wish to please had so transformed her, that she grew almost feminine. It was not without inward exultation that she heard footsteps while they sat at dessert; sounds of going and coming in the ante-chamber and noises in the salon; and knew that the usual company was arriving. She called the attention of her uncle and M. de Troisville to this fact as a proof of the affection in which she was held, whereas it really was a symptom of the paroxysm of curiosity which convulsed the whole town. Impatient to show herself in her glory, she ordered coffee and the liqueurs to be taken to the salon, whither Jacquelin went to display to the élite of Alençon the splendors of a Dresden china service, which only left the cupboard twice in a twelvemonth. All these circumstances were noted by people disposed to criticise under their breath.

"Egad!" cried du Bousquier, "nothing but Mme. Amphoux's liqueurs, which only come out on the four great festival days!"

"Decidedly, this match must have been arranged by correspondence for a year past," said M. le Président du Ronceret. "The postmaster here has been receiving letters with an Odessa postmark for the last twelve months."

Mme. Granson shuddered. M. le Chevalier de Valois had eaten a heavy dinner, but he felt the pallor spreading over his left cheek; felt, too, that he was betraying his secret, and said, "It is cold to-day, do you not think? I am freezing."

"It is the neighborhood of Russia," suggested du Bousquier. And the Chevalier looked at his rival as who should say, "Well put in!"

Mlle. Cormon was so radiant, so triumphant, that she looked positively handsome, it was thought. Nor was this unwonted brilliancy wholly due to sentiment; ever since the morning the blood had been surging through her veins; the presentiments of a great crisis at hand affected her nerves. It needed a combination of circumstances to make her so little like herself. With what joy did she not solemnly introduce the Vicomte to the Chevalier, and the Chevalier to the Vicomte; all Alençon was presented to M. de Troisville, and M. de Troisville made the acquaintance of all Alençon. It fell out, naturally enough, that the Vicomte and the Chevalier, two born aristocrats, were in sympathy at once; they recognized each other for inhabitants of the same social sphere. They began to chat as they stood by the fire. A circle formed about them listening devoutly to their conversation, though it was carried on *sotto voce*. Fully to realize the scene, imagine Mlle. Cormon standing with her back to the chimney-piece, busy preparing coffee for her supposed suitor.

M. de Valois. "So M. le Vicomte is coming to settle here, people say."

M. de Troisville. "Yes, monsieur. I have come to look for a house." (*Mlle. Cormon turns, cup in hand.*) "And I must have a large one"—(*Mlle. Cormon offers the cup of*

coffee) "to hold my family." (*The room grows dark before the old maid's eyes.*)

M. DE VALOIS. "Are you married?"

M. DE TROISVILLE. "Yes, I have been married for sixteen years. My wife is the daughter of the Princess Scherbelloff."

Mlle. Cormon dropped like one thunderstruck. Du Bousquier, seeing her reel, sprang forward, and caught her in his arms. Somebody opened the door to let him pass out with his enormous burden. The mettled Republican, counseled by Josette, summoned up his strength, bore the old maid to her room, and deposited her upon the bed. Josette, armed with a pair of scissors, cut the stay-laces, drawn outrageously tight. Du Bousquier, rough and ready, dashed cold water over Mlle. Cormon's face and the bust, which broke from its bounds like Loire in flood. The patient opened her eyes, saw du Bousquier, and gave a cry of alarmed modesty. Du Bousquier withdrew, leaving half-a-dozen women in possession, with Mme. Granson at their head, Mme. Granson beaming with joy.

What had the Chevalier de Valois done? True to his system, he had been covering the retreat.

"Poor Mlle. Cormon!" he said, addressing M. de Troisville, but looking round the room, quelling the beginnings of an outbreak of laughter with his haughty eyes. "She is dreadfully troubled with heated blood. She would not be bled before going to the Prébaudet (her country house), and this is the result of the spring weather."

"She drove over in the rain this morning," said the Abbé de Sponde. "She may have taken a little cold, and so caused the slight derangement of the system to which she is subject. But she will soon get over it."

"She was telling me the day before yesterday that she had not had a recurrence of it for three months; she added at the time that it was sure to play her a bad turn," added the Chevalier.

"Ah! so you are married!" thought Jacquelin, watching M. de Troisville, who was sipping his coffee.

The faithful man-servant made his mistress' disappointment his own. He guessed her feelings. He took away the liqueurs brought out for a bachelor, and not for a Russian woman's husband. All these little things were noticed with amusement.

The Abbé de Sponde had known all along why M. de Troisville had come to Alençon, but in his absent-mindedness he had said nothing about it; it had never entered his mind that his niece could take the slightest interest in that gentleman. As for the Vicomte, he was engrossed by the object of his journey; like many other married men, he was in no great hurry to introduce his wife into the conversation; he had had no opportunity of saying that he was married; and besides, he thought that Mlle. Cormon knew his history. Du Bousquier reappeared, and was questioned without mercy. One of the six women came down, and reported that Mlle. Cormor was feeling much better, and that her doctor had come; but she was to stay in bed, and it appeared that she ought to be bled at once. The salon soon filled. In Mlle. Cormon's absence, the ladies were free to discuss the tragi-comic scene which had just taken place; and duly they enlarged, annotated, embellished, colored, adorned, embroidered, and bedizened the tale which was to set all Alençon thinking of the old maid on the morrow.

Meanwhile, Josette upstairs was saying to her mistress, "That good M. du Bousquier! How he carried you upstairs! What a fist! Really, your illness made him quite pale. He loves you still."

And with this final phrase, the solemn and terrible day came to a close.

Next day, all morning long, the news of the comedy, with full details, circulated over Alençon, raising laughter everywhere, to the shame of the town be it said. Next day, Mlle. Cormon, very much the better for the blood-letting, would have seemed sublime to the most hardened of those who jeered at her, if they could but have seen her noble dignity and the

Christian resignation in her soul, as she gave her hand to the unconscious perpetrator of the hoax, and went in to breakfast. Ah! heartless wags, who were laughing at her expense, why could you not hear her say to the Vicomte:

"Mme. de Troisville will have some difficulty in finding a house to suit her. Do me the favor of using my house, monsieur, until you have made all your arrangements."

"But I have two girls and two boys, mademoiselle. We should put you to a great deal of inconvenience."

"Do not refuse me," said she, her eyes full of apprehension and regret.

"I made the offer, however you might decide, in my letter; but you did not take it," remarked the Abbé.

"What, uncle! did you know?——"

Poor thing, she broke off. Josette heaved a sigh, and neither M. de Troisville nor the uncle noticed anything.

After breakfast, the Abbé de Sponde, carrying out the plan agreed upon over night, took the Vicomte to see houses for sale and suitable sites for building. Mlle. Cormon was left alone in the salon.

"I am the talk of the town, child, by this time," she said, looking piteously at Josette.

"Well, mademoiselle, get married."

"But, my girl, I am not at all prepared to make a choice."

"Bah! I should take M. du Bousquier if I were you."

"M. de Valois says that he is such a Republican, Josette."

"Your gentlemen don't know what they are talking about; they say that he robbed the Republic, so he can't have been at all fond of it," said Josette, and with that she went.

"That girl is amazingly shrewd," thought Mlle. Cormon, left alone to her gnawing perplexity.

She saw that the only way of silencing talk was to marry at once. This last so patently humiliating check was enough to drive her to extreme measures; and it takes a great deal to force a feeble-minded human being out of a groove, be it good or bad. Both the old bachelors understood the position

of affairs, both made up their minds to call in the morning to make inquiries, and (in their own language) to press the point.

M. de Valois considered that the occasion demanded a scrupulous toilet; he took a bath, he groomed himself with unusual care, and for the first time and the last Césarine saw him applying "a suspicion of rouge" with incredible skill.

Du Bousquier, rough and ready Republican that he was, inspired by dogged purpose, paid no attention to his appearance, he hurried round, and came in first. The fate of men, like the destinies of empires, hangs on small things. History records all such principal causes of great failure or success—a Kellermann's charge at Marengo, a Blücher coming up at the battle of Waterloo, a Prince Eugène slighted by Louis XIV., a curé on the battlefield of Denain; but nobody profits by the lesson to be diligently attentive to the little trifles of his own life. Behold the results.—The Duchesse de Langeais in *L'Histoire des Treize* entering a convent for want of ten minutes' patience; Judge Popinot in *L'Interdiction* putting off his inquiries as to the Marquis d'Espard till to-morrow; Charles Grandet coming home by way of Bordeaux instead of Nantes—and these things are said to happen by accident and mere chance! The few moments spent in putting on that suspicion of rouge wrecked M. de Valois' hopes. Only in such a way could the Chevalier have succumbed. He had lived for the Graces, he was foredoomed to die through them. Even as he gave a last look in the mirror, the burly du Bousquier was entering the disconsolate old maid's drawing-room. His entrance coincided with a gleam of favor in the lady's mind, though in the course of her deliberations the Chevalier had decidedly had the advantage.

"It is God's will," she said to herself when du Bousquier appeared.

"Mademoiselle, I trust you will not take my importunity in bad part; I did not like to trust that great stupid of a René to make inquiries, and came myself."

"I am perfectly well," she said nervously; then, after a pause, and in a very emphatic tone, "Thank you, M. du Bousquier, for the trouble that you took and that I gave you yesterday——"

She recollected how she had lain in du Bousquier's arms, and the accident seemed to her to be a direct order from heaven. For the first time in her life a man had seen her with her belt wrenched apart, her stay-laces cut, the jewel shaken violently out of its case.

"I was so heartily glad to carry you, that I thought you a light weight," said he.

At this Mlle. Cormon looked at du Bousquier as she never looked at any man in the world before; and thus encouraged, the ex-contractor for forage flung a side glance that went straight to the old maid's heart.

"It is a pity," added he, "that this has not given me the right to keep you always." (She was listening with rapture in her face.) "You looked dazzling as you lay swooning there on the bed; I never saw such a fine woman in my life, and I have seen a good many.—There is this about a stout woman, she is superb to look at, she has only to show herself, she triumphs."

"You mean to laugh at me," said the old maid; "that is not kind of you, when the whole town is perhaps putting a bad construction on things that happened yesterday."

"It is as true as that my name is du Bousquier, mademoiselle. My feelings towards you have never changed; your first rejection did not discourage me."

The old maid lowered her eyes. There was a pause, a painful ordeal for du Bousquier. Then Mlle. Cormon made up her mind and raised her eyelids; she looked up tenderly at du Bousquier through her tears.

"If this is so, monsieur," she said, in a tremulous voice, "I only ask you to allow me to lead a Christian life, do not ask me to change any of my habits as to religion, leave me free to choose my directors, and I will give you my hand," holding it out to him as she spoke.

Du Bousquier caught the plump, honest hand that held so many francs, and kissed it respectfully.

"But I have one thing more to ask," added Mlle. Cormon, suffering him to kiss her hand.

"It is granted, and if it is impossible, it shall be done" (a reminiscence of Beaujon).

"Alas!" began the old maid, "for love of me you must burden your soul with a sin which I know is heinous; falsehood is one of the seven deadly sins; but still you can make a confession, can you not? We will both of us do penance." They looked tenderly at each other at those words.

"Perhaps," continued Mlle. Cormon, "after all, it is one of those deceptions which the Church calls venial——"

"Is she going to tell me that she is in Suzanne's plight?" thought du Bousquier. "What luck!——" Aloud he said, "Well, mademoiselle?"

"And you must take it upon you——"

"What?"

"To say that this marriage was agreed upon between us six months ago."

"Charming woman!" exclaimed the forage-contractor, and by his manner he implied that he was prepared to make even this sacrifice; "a man only does thus much for the woman he has worshiped for ten years."

"In spite of my severity?" asked she.

"Yes, in spite of your severity."

"M. du Bousquier, I have misjudged you." Again she held out her big, red hand, and again du Bousquier kissed it.

At that very moment the door opened, and the betrothed couple, turning their heads, perceived the charming but too tardy Chevalier.

"Ah! fair queen," said he, "so you have risen?"

Mlle. Cormon smiled at him, and something clutched at her heart. M. de Valois, grown remarkably young and irresistible, looked like Lauzun entering La Grande Mademoiselle's apartments.

"Ah! my dear du Bousquier!" he continued, half laugh-

ngly, so sure was he of success. "M. de Troisville and the Abbé de Sponde are in front of your house, looking it over like a pair of surveyors."

"On my word," said du Bousquier, "if the Vicomte de Troisville wants it, he can have it for forty thousand francs. It is of no use whatever to me.—Always, if mademoiselle has no objection, that must be ascertained first.—Mademoiselle, may I tell?—Yes?—Very well, *my dear Chevalier,* you shall be the first to hear"—Mlle. Cormon dropped her eyes—"of the honor and the favor that mademoiselle is doing me; I have kept it a secret for more than six months. We are going to be married in a very few days, the contract is drawn up, we shall sign it to-morrow. So, you see, that I have no further use for my house in the Rue du Cygne. I am quietly on the lookout for a purchaser, and the Abbé de Sponde, *who knew this,* naturally took M. de Troisville to see it."

There was such a color of truth about this monstrous fib that the Chevalier was quite taken in by it. *My dear Chevalier* was a return for all preceding defeats; it was like the victory won at Pultowa by Peter the Great over Charles XII. And thus du Bousquier enjoyed a delicious revenge for hundreds of pin-pricks endured in silence; but in his triumph he forgot that he was not a young man, he passed his fingers through the false toupet, and—it came off in his hand!

"I congratulate you both," said the Chevalier, with an agreeable smile; "I wish that you may end like the fairy stories, 'They lived very happily and had a fine—*family of children!*'" Here he shaped a cone of snuff in his palm before adding mockingly, "But, monsieur, you forgot that—er—you wear borrowed plumes."

Du Bousquier reddened. The false toupet was ten inches awry. Mlle. Cormon raised her eyes to the face of her betrothed, saw the bare cranium, and bashfully looked down again. Never toad looked more venomously at a victim than du Bousquier at the Chevalier.

"A pack of aristocrats that look down on me!" he thought. "I will crush you all some of these days."

The Chevalier de Valois imagined that he had regained all the lost ground. But Mlle. Cormon was not the woman to understand the connection between the Chevalier's congratulation and the allusion to the false toupet; and, for that matter, even if she had understood, her hand had been given. M. de Valois saw too clearly that all was lost. Meantime, as the two men stood without speaking, Mlle. Cormon innocently studied how to amuse them.

"Play a game of reversis," suggested she, without any malicious intention.

Du Bousquier smiled, and went as future master of the house for the card-table. Whether the Chevalier de Valois had lost his head, or whether he chose to remain to study the causes of his defeat and to remedy it, certain it is that he allowed himself to be led like a sheep to the slaughter. But he had just received the heaviest of all bludgeon blows; and a noble might have been excused if he had been at any rate stunned by it. Very soon the worthy Abbé de Sponde and M. de Troisville returned, and at once Mlle. Cormon hurried into the ante-chamber, took her uncle aside, and told him in a whisper of her decision. Then, hearing that the house in the Rue du Cygne suited M. de Troisville, she begged her betrothed to do her the service of saying that her uncle knew that the place was for sale. She dared not confide the fib to the Abbé, for fear that he should forget. The falsehood was destined to prosper better than if it had been a virtuous action. All Alençon heard the great news that night. For four days the town had found as much to say as in the ominous days of 1814 and 1815. Some laughed at the idea, others thought it true; some condemned, others approved the marriage. The bourgeoisie of Alençon regarded it as a conquest, and they were the best pleased.

The Chevalier de Valois, next day, among his own circle, brought out this cruel epigram, "The Cormons are ending as they began; stewards and contractors are all on a footing."

The news of Mlle. Cormon's choice went to poor Athanase's heart; but he showed not a sign of the dreadful tumult surg-

ing within. He heard of the marriage at President du Ronceret's while his mother was playing a game of boston. Mme. Granson, looking up, saw her son's face in the glass; he looked white, she thought, but then he had been pale ever since vague rumors had reached him in the morning. Mlle. Cormon was the card on which Athanase staked his life, and chill presentiments of impending catastrophe already wrapped him about. When intellect and imagination have exaggerated a calamity till it becomes a burden too heavy for shoulders and brow to bear, when some long-cherished hope fails utterly, and with it the visions which enable a man to forget the fierce vulture cares gnawing at his heart; then, if that man has no belief in himself, in spite of his powers; no belief in the future, in spite of the Power Divine—he is broken in pieces. Athanase was a product of education under the Empire. Fatalism, the Emperor's creed, spread downwards to the lowest ranks of the army, to the very schoolboys at their desks. Athanase followed Mme. du Ronceret's play with a stolidity which might so easily have been taken for indifference, that Mme. Granson fancied she had been mistaken as to her son's feelings.

Athanase's apparent carelessness explained his refusal to sacrifice his so-called "Liberal" opinions. This word, then recently coined for the Emperor Alexander, proceeded into the language, I believe, by way of Mme. de Staël through Benjamin Constant.

After that fatal evening the unhappy young man took to haunting one of the most picturesque walks along the Sarthe; every artist who comes to Alençon sketches it from that point of view, for the sake of the watermills, and the river gleaming brightly out among the fields, between the shapely well-grown trees on either side. Flat though the land may be, it lacks none of the subdued peculiar charm of French landscape; for in France your eyes are never wearied by glaring Eastern sunlight, nor saddened by too continual mist. It is a lonely spot. Dwellers in the provinces care nothing for beautiful scenery, perhaps because it is always about them, perhaps

because there is a sense lacking in them. If there is such a thing as a promenade, a mall, or any spot from which you see a beautiful view, it is sure to be the one unfrequented part of the town. Athanase liked the loneliness, with the water like a living presence in it, and the fields just turning green in the warmth of the early spring sunlight. Occasionally some one who had seen him sitting at a poplar foot, and received an intent gaze from his eyes, would speak to Mme. Granson about him.

"There is something the matter with your son."

"I know what he is about," the mother would say with a satisfied air, hinting that he was meditating some great work.

Athanase meddled no more in politics; he had no opinions; and yet, now and again, he was merry enough, merry at the expense of others, after the wont of those who stand alone and apart in contempt of public opinion. The young fellow lived so entirely outside the horizon of provincial ideas and amusements, that he was interesting to few people; he did not so much as rouse curiosity. Those who spoke of him to his mother did so for her sake, not for his. Not a creature in Alençon sympathized with Athanase; the Sarthe received the tears which no friend, no loving woman dried. If the magnificent Suzanne had chanced to pass that way, how much misery might have been prevented—the two young creatures would have fallen in love.

And yet Suzanne certainly passed that way. Her ambition had been first awakened by a sufficiently marvelous tale of things which happened in 1799; an old story of adventures begun at the sign of the *Three Moors* had turned her childish brain. They used to tell how an adventuress, beautiful as an angel, had come from Paris with a commission from Fouché to ensnare the Marquis de Montauran, the Chouan leader sent over by the Bourbons; how she met him at that very inn of the *Three Moors* as he came back from his Mortagne expedition; and how she won his love, and gave him up to his enemies. The romantic figure of this woman, the power of beauty, the whole story of Marie de Verneuil and the Marquis

de Montauran, dazzled Suzanne, till, as she grew older, she too longed to play with men's lives. A few months after the flight, she could not resist the desire to see her native place again, on her way to Brittany with an artist. She wanted to see Fougères, where the Marquis de Montauran met his death; and thought of making a pilgrimage to the scenes of stories told to her in childhood of that War in the West, so little known even yet. She wished, besides, to revisit Alençon with such splendor in her surroundings, and so completely metamorphosed, that nobody should know her again. She intended to put her mother beyond the reach of want in one moment, and, in some tactful way, to send a sum of money to poor Athanase—a sum which for genius in modern days is the equivalent of a Rebecca's gift of horse and armor to an Ivanhoe of the Middle Ages.

A month went by. Opinions as to Mlle. Cormon's marriage fluctuated in the strangest way. There was an incredulous section which strenuously denied the truth of the report, and a party of believers who persistently affirmed it. At the end of a fortnight, the doubters received a severe check. Du Bousquier's house was sold to M. de Troisville for forty-three thousand francs. M. de Troisville meant to live quite quietly in Alençon; he intended to return to Paris after the death of the Princess Scherbelloff, but until the inheritance fell in he would spend his time in looking after his estates. This much appeared to be fact. But the doubting faction declined to be crushed. Their assertion was that, married or no, du Bousquier had done a capital stroke of business, for his house only stood him in a matter of twenty-seven thousand francs. The believers were taken aback by this peremptory decision on the part of their opponents. "Choisnel, Mlle. Cormon's notary, had not heard a word of marriage settlements," added the incredulous.

But on the twentieth day the unshaken believers enjoyed a signal victory over the doubters. M. Lepresseur, the Liberal notary, went to Mlle. Cormon's house, and the contract was signed. This was the first of many sacrifices

which Rose made to her husband. The fact was that du Bousquier detested Choisnel; he blamed the notary for Mlle. Armande's refusal in the first place, as well as for his previous rejection by Mlle. Cormon, who, as he believed, had followed Mlle. Armande's example. He managed Mlle. Cormon so well, that she, noble-hearted woman, believing that she had misjudged her future husband, wished to make reparation for her doubts, and sacrificed her notary to her love. Still she submitted the contract to Choisnel, and he—a man worthy of Plutarch—defended Mlle. Cormon's interests by letter. This was the one cause of delay.

Mlle. Cormon received a good many anonymous letters. She was informed, to her no small astonishment, that Suzanne was as honest a woman as she was herself; and that the seducer in the false toupet could not possibly have played the part assigned to him in such an adventure. Mlle. Cormon scorned anonymous letters; she wrote, however, to Suzanne with a view to gaining light on the creeds of the Maternity Society. Suzanne probably had heard of du Bousquier's approaching marriage; she confessed to her stratagem, sent a thousand francs to the Fund, and damaged the forage-contractor's character very considerably. Mlle. Cormon called an extraordinary meeting of the Maternity Charity, and the assembled matrons passed a resolution that henceforward the Fund should give help after and not before misfortunes befell.

In spite of these proceedings, which supplied the town with tidbits of gossip to discuss, the banns were published at the church and the mayor's office. It was Athanase's duty to make out the needful documents. The betrothed bride had gone to the Prébaudet, a measure taken partly by way of conventional modesty, partly for general security. Thither du Bousquier went every morning, fortified by atrocious and sumptuous bouquets, returning in the evening to dinner.

At last, one gray rainy day in June, the wedding took place; and Mlle. Cormon and the Sieur du Bousquier, as the incredulous faction called him, were married at the parish

church in the sight of all Alençon. Bride and bridegroom drove to the mayor's office, and afterwards to the church, in a calèche—a splendid equipage for Alençon. Du Bousquier had it sent privately from Paris. The loss of the old cariole was a kind of calamity for the whole town. The saddler of the Porte de Séez lost an income of fifty francs per annum for repairs; he lifted up his voice and wept. With dismay the town of Alençon beheld the luxury introduced by the Maison Cormon; every one feared a rise of prices all round, an increase of house rent, an invasion of Paris furniture. There were some whose curiosity pricked them to the point of giving Jacquelin ten sous for a nearer sight of so startling an innovation in a thrifty province. A pair of Normandy horses likewise caused much concern.

"If we buy horses for ourselves in this way, we shall not sell them long to those that come to buy of us," said du Ronceret's set.

The reasoning seemed profound, stupid though it was, in so far as it prevented the district from securing a monopoly of money from outside. In the political economy of the provinces the wealth of nations consists not so much in a brisk circulation of money as in hoards of unproductive coin.

At length the old maid's fatal wish was fulfilled. Penelope sank under the attack of pleurisy contracted forty days before the wedding. Nothing could save her. Mme. Granson, Mariette, Mme. du Coudrai, Mme. du Ronceret—the whole town, in fact—noticed that the bride came into church with the left foot foremost, an omen all the more alarming because the word Left even then had acquired a political significance. The officiating priest chanced to open the mass-book at the *De profundis.* And so the wedding passed off, amid presages so ominous, so gloomy, so overwhelming, that nobody was found to augur well of it. Things went from bad to worse. There was no attempt at a wedding party; the bride and bridegroom started out for the Prébaudet. Paris fashions were to supplant old customs! In the evening Alençon said its say as to all these absurdities; some persons had reckoned

upon one of the usual provincial jollifications, which they considered they had a right to expect, and these spoke their minds pretty freely. But Mariette and Jacquelin had a merry wedding, and they alone in all Alençon gainsaid the dismal prophecies.

Bu Bousquier wished to spend the profit made by the sale of his house on restoring and modernizing the Hôtel Cormon. He had quite made up his mind to stay for some months at the Prébaudet, whither he brought his uncle de Sponde. The news spread dismay through Alençon; every one felt that du Bousquier was about to draw the country into the downward path of domestic comfort. The foreboding grew to a fear one morning when du Bousquier drove over from the Prébaudet to superintend his workmen at the Val-Noble; and the townspeople beheld a tilbury, harnessed to a new horse, and René in livery by his master's side. Du Bousquier had invested his wife's savings in the funds which stood at sixty-seven francs fifty centimes. This was the first act of the new administration. In the space of one year, by constantly speculating for a rise, he made for himself a fortune almost as considerable as his wife's. But something else happened in connection with this marriage to make it seem yet more inauspicious, and put all previous overwhelming portents and alarming innovations into the background.

It was the evening of the wedding day. Athanase and his mother were sitting in the salon by the little fire of brushwood (or *régalades,* as they say in the patois), which the servant had lighted after dinner.

"Well," said Mme. Granson, "we will go to President du Ronceret's to-night, now that we have no Mlle. Cormon. Goodness me! I shall never get used to calling her Mme. du Bousquier; that name makes my lips sore."

Athanase looked at his mother with a sad constraint; he could not smile, and he wanted to acknowledge, as it were, the artless thoughtfulness which soothed the wound it could not heal.

"Mamma," he began—it was several years since he had

used that word, and his tones were so gentle that they sounded like the voice of his childhood—"'mamma, dear, do not let us go out just yet; it is so nice here by the fire!"

It was a supreme cry of mortal anguish; the mother heard it and did not understand.

"Let us stay, child," she said. "I would certainly rather talk with you and listen to your plans than play at boston and perhaps lose my money."

"You are beautiful to-night: I like to look at you. And besides, the current of my thoughts is in harmony with this poor little room, where we have been through so much trouble —you and I."

"And there is still more in store for us, poor Athanase, until your work succeeds. For my own part, I am used to poverty; but, oh, my treasure, to look on and see your youth go by while you have no joy of it! Nothing but work in your life! That thought is like a disease for a mother. It tortures me night and morning. I wake up to it. Ah, God in heaven! what have I done? What sin of mine is punished with this?"

She left her seat, took a little chair, and sat down beside Athanase, nestling close up to his side, till she could lay her head on her child's breast. Where a mother is truly a mother, the grace of love never dies. Athanase kissed her on the eyes, on the gray hair, on the forehead, with the reverent love that fain would lay the soul where the lips are laid.

"I shall never succeed," he said, trying to hide the fatal purpose which he was revolving in his mind.

"Pooh! you are not going to be discouraged? Mind can do all things, as you say. With ten bottles of ink, ten reams of paper, and a strong will, Luther turned Europe upside down. Well, and you are going to make a great name for yourself; you are going to use to good ends the powers which he used for evil. Did you not say so? Now *I* remember what you say, you see; I understand much more than you think; for you still lie so close under my heart, that your least little thought thrills through it, as your slightest movement did once."

"I shall not succeed *here,* you see, mamma, and I will not have you looking on while I am struggling and heartsore and in anguish. Mother, let me leave Alençon; I want to go through it all away from you."

"*I* want to be at your side always," she said proudly. "Suffering alone! *you* without your mother! your poor mother that would be your servant if need were, and keep out of sight for fear of injuring you, if you wished it, and never accuse you of pride! No, no, Athanase, we will never be parted!"

Athanase put his arms about her and held her with a passionate tight clasp, as a dying man might cling to life.

"And yet I wish it," he said. "If we do not part, it is all over with me. . . . The double pain—yours and mine—would kill me. It is better that I should live, is it not?"

Mme. Granson looked with haggard eyes into her son's face.

"So this is what you have been brooding over! They said truth. Then you are going away?"

"Yes."

"But you are not going until you have told me all about it, and without giving me any warning? You must have some things to take with you, and money. There are some louis d'or sewed into my petticoat; you must have them."

Athanase burst into tears.

"That was all that I wanted to tell you," he said after a while. "Now, I will see you to the President's house."

Mother and son went out together. Athanase left Mme. Granson at the door of the house where she was to spend the evening. He looked long at the shafts of light that escaped through chinks in the shutters. He stood there glued to the spot, while a quarter of an hour went by, and it was with almost delirious joy that he heard his mother say, "Grand independence of hearts."

"Poor mother, I have deceived her!" he exclaimed to himself as he reached the river.

He came down to the tall poplar on the bank where he had been wont to sit and meditate during the last six weeks. Two

big stones lay there; he had brought them himself for a seat. And now, looking out over the fair landscape lying in the moonlight, he passed in review all the so glorious future that should have been his. He went through cities stirred to enthusiasm by his name; he heard the cheers of crowded streets, breathed the incense of banquets, looked with a great yearning over that life of his dreams, rose uplifted and radiant in glorious triumph, raised a statue to himself, summoned up all his illusions to bid them farewell in a last Olympian carouse. The magic could only last for a little while; it fled, it had vanished for ever. In that supreme moment he clung to his beautiful tree as if it had been a friend; then he put the stones, one in either pocket, and buttoned his overcoat. His hat he had purposely left at home. He went down the bank to look for a deep spot which he had had in view for some time; and slid in resolutely, trying to make as little noise as possible. There was scarcely a sound.

When Mme. Granson came home about half-past nine that night, the maid-of-all-work said nothing of Athanase, but handed her a letter. Mme. Granson opened it and read:

"I have gone away, my kind mother; do not think hardly of me." That was all.

"A pretty thing he has done!" cried she. "And how about his linen and the money? But he will write, and I shall find him. The poor children always think themselves wiser than their fathers and mothers." And she went to bed with a quiet mind.

The Sarthe had risen with yesterday's rain. Fishers and anglers were prepared for this, for the swollen river washes down the eels from the little streams on its course. It so happened that an eel-catcher had set his lines over the very spot where poor Athanase had chosen to drown himself, thinking that he should never be heard of again; and next morning, about six o'clock, the man drew out the young dead body.

One or two women among Mme. Granson's few friends went to prepare the poor widow with all possible care to receive the dreadful yield of the river. The news of the suicide,

as might be expected, produced a tremendous sensation. Only last evening the poverty-stricken man of genius had not a single friend; the morning after his death scores of voices cried, "I would so willingly have helped him!" So easy is it to play a charitable part when no outlay is involved. The Chevalier de Valois, in the spirit of revenge, explained the suicide. It was a boyish, sincere, and noble passion for Mlle. Cormon that drove Athanase to take his own life. And when the Chevalier had opened Mme. Granson's eyes, she saw a multitude of little things to confirm this view. The story grew touching; women cried over it.

Mme. Granson sorrowed with a dumb concentration of grief which few understood. For mothers there are two ways of bereavement. It often happens that every one else can understand the greatness of her loss; her boy was admired and appreciated, young or handsome, with fair prospects before him or brilliant successes won already; every one regrets him, every one shares her mourning, and the grief that is widely spread is not so hard to bear. Then there is the loss that *one* understands. No one else knew her boy and all that he was; his smiles were for her alone; she, and she only, knew how much perished with that life, too early cut short. Such sorrow hides itself; beside that darkness other woe grows pale; no words can describe it; and, happily, there are not many women who know what it is to have those heart-strings finally severed.

Even before Mme. du Bousquier came back to town, her obliging friend, Mme. du Ronceret, went to fling a dead body down among the roses of her new-wedded happiness, to let her know what a love she had refused. Ever so gently the Présidente squeezed a shower of drops of wormwood over the honey of the first month of married life. And as Mme. du Bousquier returned, it so happened that she met Mme. Granson at the corner of the Val-Noble, and the look in the heart-broken mother's eyes cut her to the quick. It was a look from a woman dying of grief, a thousand curses gathered up into one glance of malediction, a thousand sparks in one gleam of hate. It frightened Mme. du Bousquier; it boded ill, and invoked ill upon her.

Mme. Granson had belonged to the party most opposed to the curé; she was a bitter partisan of the priest of St. Leonard's; but on the very evening of the tragedy she thought of the rigid orthodoxy of her own party, and she shuddered. She herself laid her son in his shroud, thinking all the while of the Mother of the Saviour; then with a soul quivering with agony, she betook herself to the house of the perjured priest. She found him busy, the humble good man, storing the hemp and flax which he gave to poor women and girls to spin, so that no worker should ever want work, a piece of wise charity which had saved more than one family that could not endure to beg. He left his hemp at once and brought his visitor into the dining-room, where the stricken mother saw the frugality of her own housekeeping in the supper that stood waiting for the curé.

"M. l'Abbé," she began, "I have come to entreat you——"

She burst into tears, and could not finish the sentence.

"I know why you have come," answered the holy man, "and I trust to you, madame, and to your relative Mme. du Bousquier to make it right with his Lordship at Séez. Yes, I will pray for your unhappy boy; yes, I will say masses; but we must avoid all scandal, we must give no occasion to ill-disposed people to gather together in the church. . . . I myself, alone, and at night——"

"Yes, yes, as you wish, if only he is laid in consecrated ground!" she said, poor mother; and taking the priest's hand in hers, she kissed it.

And so, just before midnight, a bier was smuggled into the parish church. Four young men, Athanase's friends, carried it. There were a few little groups of veiled and black-clad women, Mme. Granson's friends, and some seven or eight lads that had been intimate with the dead. The bier was covered with a pall, torches were lit at the corners, and the curé read the office for the dead, with the help of one little choir boy whom he could trust. Then the suicide was buried, noiselessly, in a corner of the churchyard, and a dark wooden cross with no name upon it marked the grave for the mother. Athanase lived and died in the shadow.

Not a voice was raised against the curé; his Lordship at Séez was silent; the mother's piety redeemed her son's impious deed.

Months afterwards, moved by the inexplicable thirst of sorrow which drives the unhappy to steep their lips in their bitter cup, the poor woman went to see the place where her son drowned himself. Perhaps she felt instinctively that there were thoughts to be gathered under the poplar tree; perhaps, too, she longed to see all that his eyes had seen for the last time. The sight of the spot would kill many a mother; while again there are some who can kneel and worship there.—There are truths on which the patient anatomist of human nature cannot insist too much; verities against which education and laws and systems of philosophy are shattered. It is absurd—let us repeat it again and again—to try to lay down hard-and-fast rules in matters of feeling; the personal element comes in to modify feeling as it arises, and a man's character influences his most instinctive actions.

Mme. Granson, by the river-side, saw a woman at some distance—a woman who came nearer, till she reached the fatal spot, and exclaimed:

"Then this is the place!"

One other woman in the world wept there as the mother was weeping, and that woman was Suzanne. She had heard of the tragedy on her arrival that morning at the *Three Moors.* If poor Athanase had been alive, she might have done what poor and generous people dream of doing, and the rich never think of putting in practice; she would have enclosed a thousand francs with the words, "Money lent by your father to a comrade who now repays you." During her journey Suzanne had thought of this angelic way of giving. She looked up and saw Mme. Granson.

"I loved him," she said; then she hurried away.

Suzanne, true to her nature, did not leave Alençon till she had changed the bride's wreath of orange flowers to water-lilies. She was the first to assert that Mme. du Bousquier would be Mlle. Cormon as long as she lived. And with one

jibe she avenged both Athanase and the dear Chevalier de Valois.

Alençon beheld another and more piteous suicide. Athanase was promptly forgotten by a world that willingly, and indeed of necessity, forgets its dead as soon as possible; but the poor Chevalier's existence became a kind of death-in-life, a suicide continued morning after morning during fourteen years. Three months after du Bousquier's marriage, people remarked, not without astonishment, that the Chevalier's linen was turning yellow, and his hair irregularly combed. M. de Valois was no more, for a disheveled M. de Valois could not be said to be himself. An ivory tooth here and there deserted from the ranks, and no student of human nature could discover to what corps they belonged, whether they were native or foreign, animal or vegetable; nor whether, finally, they had been extracted by old age, or were merely lying out of sight and out of mind in the Chevalier's dressing-table drawer. His cravat was wisped, careless of elegance, into a cord. The negroes' heads grew pale for lack of soap and water. The lines on the Chevalier's face deepened into wrinkles and darkened as his complexion grew more and more like parchment; his neglected nails were sometimes adorned with an edge of black velvet. Grains of snuff lay scattered like autumn leaves in the furrows of his waistcoat. The cotton in his ears was but seldom renewed. Melancholy, brooding on his brow, spread her sallow hues through his wrinkles; in short, time's ravages, hitherto so carefully repaired, began to appear in rifts and cracks in the noble edifice. Here was proof of the power of the mind over matter! The blond cavalier, the *jeune premier,* fell into decay when hope failed.

Hitherto the Chevalier's nose had made a peculiarly elegant appearance in public; never had it been seen to distil a drop of amber, to let fall a dark wafer of moist rappee; but now, with a snuff-bedabbled border about the nostrils, and an unsightly stream taking advantage of the channel hollowed above the upper lip, that nose, which no longer took pains to please, revealed the immense trouble that the Chevalier must have

formerly taken with himself. In this neglect you saw the extent, the greatness and persistence of the man's designs upon Mlle. Cormon. The Chevalier was crushed by a pun from du Coudrai, whose dismissal he however procured. It was the first instance of vindictiveness on the part of the urbane gentleman; but then the pun was atrocious, worse by a hundred cubits than any other ever made by the registrar of mortgages. M. du Coudrai, observing this nasal revolution, had nicknamed the Chevalier "Nérestan" (*nez-restant*).

Latterly the Chevalier's witticisms had been few and far between; the anecdotes went the way of the teeth, but his appetite continued as good as ever; out of the great shipwreck of hopes he saved nothing but his digestion; and while he took his snuff feebly, he despatched his dinner with an avidity alarming to behold. You may mark the extent of the havoc wrought in his ideas in the fact that his colloquies with the Princess Goritza grew less and less frequent. He came to Mlle. Armande's one day with a false calf in front of his shins. The bankruptcy of elegance was something painful, I protest; all Alençon was shocked by it. It scared society to see an elderly young man drop suddenly into his dotage, and from sheer depression of spirits pass from fifty to ninety years. And besides, he had betrayed his secret. He had been waiting and lying in wait for Mlle. Cormon. For ten long years, persevering sportsman that he was, he had been stalking the game, and he had missed his shot. The impotent Republic had won a victory over a valiant Aristocracy, and that in full flood of Restoration! The sham had triumphed over the real; spirit was vanquished by matter, diplomacy by insurrection; and as a final misfortune, a grisette in an outbreak of bad temper, let out the secret of the Chevalier's levées!

At once he became a man of the worst character. The Liberal party laid all du Bousquier's foundlings on the Chevalier's doorstep, while the Faubourg Saint-Germain of Alençon boastingly accepted them; laughed and cried, "The dear Chevalier! What else could he do?" Saint-Germain pitied the Chevalier, took him to its bosom, and smiled more than

ever upon him; while an appalling amount of unpopularity was drawn down upon du Bousquier's head. Eleven persons seceded from the salon Cormon and went over to the d'Esgrignons.

But the especial result of the marriage was a more sharply-marked division of parties in Alençon. The Maison d'Esgrignon represented undiluted aristocracy; for the Troisvilles on their return joined the clique. The Maison Cormon, skilfully influenced by du Bousquier, was not exactly Liberal, nor yet resolutely Royalist, but of that unlucky shade of opinion which produced the 221 members, so soon as the political struggle took a definite shape, and the greatest, most august, and only real power of Kingship came into collision with that most false, fickle, and tyrannical power which, when wielded by an elective body, is known as the power of Parliament.

The third salon, the salon du Ronceret, out and out Radical in its politics, was secretly allied with the Maison Cormon.

With the return from the Prébaudet, a life of continual suffering began for the Abbé de Sponde. He kept all that he endured locked within his soul, uttering not a word of complaint to his niece; but to Mlle. Armande he opened his heart, admitting that taking one folly with another, he should have preferred the Chevalier. M. de Valois would not have had the bad taste to thwart a feeble old man with but a few days to live. Du Bousquier had pulled the old home to pieces.

"Mademoiselle," the old Abbé said as the thin tears fell from his faded old eyes, "the lime-tree walk, where I have been used to meditate these fifty years, is gone. My dear lime-trees have all been cut down! Just as I am nearing the end of my days the Republic has come back again in the shape of a horrible revolution in the house."

"Your niece must be forgiven," said the Chevalier de Valois. "Republicanism is a youthful error; youth goes out to seek for liberty, and finds tyranny in its worst form—the tyranny of the impotent rabble. Your niece, poor thing, has not been punished by the thing wherein she sinned."

"What is to become of me in a house with naked women dancing all over the walls? Where shall I find the lime-tree walks where I used to read my breviary?"

Like Kant, who lost the thread of his ideas when somebody cut down the fir-tree on which he fixed his eyes as he meditated, the good Abbé pacing up and down the shadowless alleys could not say his prayers with the same uplifting of soul. Du Bousquier had laid out an English garden!

"It looked nicer," Mme. du Bousquier said. Not that she really thought so, but the Abbé Couturier had authorized her to say and do a good many things that she might please her husband.

With the restoration, all the glory departed from the old house, and all its quaint, cheerful, old-world look. If the Chevalier de Valois' neglect of his person might be taken as a sort of abdication, the bourgeois majesty of the salon Cormon passed away when the drawing-room was decorated with white and gold; and blue silk curtains and mahogany ottomans made their appearance. In the dining-room, fitted up in the modern style, the dishes were somehow not so hot, nor the dinners quite what they had been. M. du Coudrai said that the puns stuck fast in his throat when he saw the painted figures on the walls and felt their eyes upon him. Without, the house was provincial as ever; within, the forage-contractor of the Directory made himself everywhere felt. All over the house you saw the stockbroker's bad taste; stucco pilasters, glass doors, classic cornices, arid decoration—a medley of every imaginable style and ill-assorted magnificence.

Alençon criticised such unheard-of luxury for a fortnight, and grew proud of it at the end of a few months. Several rich manufacturers refurnished their houses in consequence, and set up fine drawing-rooms. Modern furniture made its appearance; astral lamps might even be seen in some places.

The Abbé de Sponde was the first to see the unhappiness which lay beneath the surface of his dear child's married life. The old dignified simplicity which ruled their way of living was gone; du Bousquier gave two balls every month in the

course of the first winter. The venerable house—oh, to think of it!—echoed with the sound of violins and worldly gaiety. The Abbé, on his knees, prayed while the merriment lasted.

The politics of the sober salon underwent a gradual change for the worse. The Abbé de Sponde divined du Bousquier; he shuddered at his nephew's dictatorial tone. He saw tears in his niece's eyes when the disposal of her fortune was taken out of her hands; her husband left her only the control of the linen, the table, and such things as fall to a woman's lot. Rose had no more orders to give. Jacquelin, now coachman exclusively, took his orders from no one but his master; René, the groom, did likewise, so did the man-cook imported from Paris; Mariette was only the kitchen-maid; and Mme. du Bousquier had no one to tyrannize over but Josette.

Does any one know how much it costs to give up the delicious exercise of authority? If the triumph of will is one of the most intoxicating of the great man's joys, to have one's own way is the whole life of narrow natures. No one but a cabinet minister fallen into disgrace can sympathize with Mme. du Bousquier's bitter pain when she saw herself reduced to a cipher in her own house. She often drove out when she would rather have stayed at home; she saw company which she did not like; she who had been free to spend as she pleased, and had never spent at all, had lost the control of the money which she loved. Impose limits, and who does not wish to go beyond them? Is there any sharper suffering than that which comes of thwarted will?

But these beginnings were the roses of life. Every concession was counseled by poor Rose's love for her husband, and at first du Bousquier behaved admirably to his wife. He was very good to her; he brought forward sufficient reasons for every encroachment. The room, so long left empty, echoed with the voices of husband and wife in fireside talk. And so, for the first few years of married life, Mme. du Bousquier wore a face of content, and that little air of emancipation and mystery often seen in a young wife after a marriage of love. She had no more trouble with "heated blood." This

countenance of hers routed scoffers, gave the lie to gossip concerning du Bousquier, and put observers of human nature at fault.

Rose Marie Victoire was so afraid lest she should lose her husband's affection or drive him from her side by setting her will against his, that she would have made any sacrifice, even of her uncle if need be. And the Abbé de Sponde, deceived by Mme. du Bousquier's poor foolish little joys, bore his own discomforts the more easily for the thought that his niece was happy.

At first Alençon shared this impression. But there was one man less easy to deceive than all the rest of Alençon put together. The Chevalier de Valois had taken refuge on the Mons Sacer of the most aristocratic section, and spent his time with the d'Esgrignons. He lent an ear to the scandal and tittle-tattle; night and day he studied how to have his revenge before he died. The perpetrator of puns had been already brought low, and he meant to stab du Bousquier to the heart.

The poor Abbé, knowing as he did the cowardliness of his niece's first and last love, shuddered as he guessed his nephew's hypocritical nature and the man's intrigues. Du Bousquier, be it said, put some constraint upon himself; he had an eye to the Abbé's property, and had no wish to annoy his wife's uncle in any way, yet he dealt the old man his death-blow.

If you can translate the word Intolerance by Firmness of Principle; if you can forbear to condemn in the old Roman Catholic Vicar-General that stoicism which Scott has taught us to revere in Jeanie Deans' Puritan father; if, finally, you can recognize in the Roman Church the nobility of a *Potius mori quam fœdari* which you admire in a Republican—then you can understand the anguish that rent the great Abbé de Sponde when he saw the apostate in his nephew's drawing-room; when he was compelled to meet the renegade, the backslider, the enemy of the Church, the aider and abettor of the Oath to the Constitution. It was du Bousquier's private ambition to lord it over the countryside; and as a first proof of his power, he determined to reconcile the officiating priest of St.

Leonard's with the curé of Alençon. He gained his object. His wife imagined that peace had been made where the stern Abbé saw no peace, but surrender of principle. M. de Sponde was left alone in the faith. The Bishop came to du Bousquier's house, and appeared satisfied with the cessation of hostilities. The Abbé François' goodness had conquered every one—every one except the old Roman of the Roman Church, who might have cried with Cornélie, "Ah, God! what virtues you make me hate!" The Abbé de Sponde died when orthodoxy expired in the diocese.

In 1819 the Abbé de Sponde's property raised Mme. du Bousquier's income from land to twenty-five thousand livres without counting the Prébaudet or the house in the Val-Noble. About the same time du Bousquier returned the amount of his wife's savings (which she had made over to him), and instructed her to invest the moneys in purchases of land near the Prébaudet, so that the estate, including the Abbé de Sponde's adjoining property, was one of the largest in the department. As for du Bousquier, he invested his money with the Kellers, and made a journey to Paris four times a year. Nobody knew the exact amount of his private fortune, but at this time he was supposed to be one of the wealthiest men in the department of the Orne. A dexterous man, and the permanent candidate of the Liberal party, he always lost his election by seven or eight votes under the Restoration. Ostensibly he repudiated his connection with the Liberals, offering himself as a Ministerial-Royalist candidate; but although he succeeded in gaining the support of the Congrégation and of the magistrature, the repugnance of the administration was too strong to be overcome.

Then the rabid Republican, frantic with ambition, conceived the idea of beginning a struggle with the Royalism and Aristocracy of the country, just as they were carrying all before them. He gained the support of the clergy by an appearance of piety very skilfully kept up; always going with his wife to mass, giving money to the convents, and supporting the confraternity of the Sacré-Cœur; and whenever a dis-

pute arose between the clergy and the town, or the department, or the State, he was very careful to take the clerical side. And so, while secretly supported by the Liberals, he gained the influence of the Church; and as a Constitutional-Royalist kept close beside the aristocratic section, the better to ruin it. And ruin it he did. He was always on the watch for any mistake on the part of those high in rank or in office under the Government; with the support of the bourgeoisie he carried out all the improvements which the nobles and officials ought to have undertaken and directed, if the imbecile jealousies of place had not frustrated their efforts. Constitutional opinion carried him through in the affair of the curé, in the theatre question, and in all the various schemes of improvement which du Bousquier first prompted the Liberals to make, and afterwards supported in the course of debate, declaring himself in favor of any measures for the good of the country. He brought about an industrial revolution; and his detestation of certain families on the highroad to Brittany rapidly increased the material prosperity of the province.

And so he paved the way for his revenge upon the *gens à châteaux* in general, and the d'Esgrignons in particular; some day, not so very far distant, he would plunge a poisoned blade into the very heart of the clique. He found capital to revive the manufacture of point d'Alençon and to increase the linen trade. Alençon began to spin its own flax by machinery. And while his name was associated with all these interests, and written in the hearts of the masses, while he did all that Royalty left undone, du Bousquier risked not a farthing of his own. With his means, he could afford to wait while enterprising men with little capital were obliged to give up and leave the results of their labors to luckier successors. He posed as a banker. A Laffitte on a small scale, he became a sleeping partner in all new inventions, taking security for his money. And as a public benefactor, he did remarkably well for himself. He was a promoter of insurance companies, a patron of new public conveyances; he got up memorials for necessary roads and bridges. The authorities, being left be-

hind in this way, regarded this activity in the light of an encroachment; they blundered, and put themselves in the wrong, for the prefecture was obliged to give way for the good of the country.

Du Bousquier embittered the provincial noblesse against the court nobles and the peerage. He helped, in short, to bring it to pass that a very large body of Constitutional-Royalists supported the *Journal des Débats* and M. de Chateaubriand in a contest with the throne. It was an ungrateful opposition based on ignoble motives which contributed to bring about the triumph of the bourgeoisie and the press in 1830. Wherefore du Bousquier, like those whom he represented, had the pleasure of watching a funeral procession of Royalty* pass through their district without a single demonstration of sympathy from a population alienated from them in ways so numerous that they cannot be indicated here.

Then the old Republican, with all that weight of masses on his conscience, hauled down the white flag above the town-hall amid the applause of the people. For fifteen years he had acted a part to satisfy his vendetta, and no man in France beholding the new throne raised in August 1830 could feel more intoxicated than he with the joy of revenge. For him, the succession of the younger branch meant the triumph of the Revolution; for him, the hoisting of the Tricolor flag was the resurrection of the Mountain; and *this* time the nobles should be brought low by a surer method than the guillotine, in that its action should be less violent. A peerage for life only; a National Guard which stretches the marquis and the grocer from the corner shop on the same camp bed; the abolition of entail demanded by a bourgeois barrister; a Catholic Church deprived of its supremacy; in short, all the legislative inventions of August 1830 simply meant for du Bousquier the principles of 1793 carried out in a most ingenious manner.

Du Bousquier has been receiver-general of taxes since 1830. He relied for success upon his old connections with Egalité Orléans (father of Louis Philippe) and M. de Folman, stew-

*Charles X. on his way to England.

ard of the Dowager Duchess. He is supposed to have an income of eighty thousand livres. In the eyes of his fellow-countrymen, *Monsieur* du Bousquier is a man of substance, honorable, upright, obliging, unswerving in his principles. To him, Alençon owes her participation in the industrial movement which makes her, as it were, the first link in a chain which some day perhaps may bind Brittany to the state of things which we nickname "modern civilization." In 1816 Alençon boasted but two carriages, properly speaking; ten years afterwards, calèches, coupés, landaus, cabriolets, and tilburies were rolling about the streets without causing any astonishment. At first the townsmen and landowners were alarmed by the rise of prices, afterwards they discovered that the increased expenditure produced a corresponding increase in their incomes.

Du Ronceret's prophetic words, "Du Bousquier is a very strong man," were now taken up by the country. But, unfortunately for du Bousquier's wife, the remark is a shocking misnomer. Du Bousquier the husband is a very different person from du Bousquier the public man and politician. The great citizen, so liberal in his opinions, so easy humored, so full of love for his country, is a despot at home, and has not a particle of love for his wife. The Cromwell of the Val-Noble is profoundly astute, hypocritical, and crafty; he behaves to those of his own household as he behaved to the aristocrats on whom he fawned, until he could cut their throats. Like his friend Bernadotte, he has an iron hand in a velvet glove. His wife gave him no children. Suzanne's epigram, and the Chevalier de Valois' insinuations, were justified; but the Liberals and Constitutional-Royalists among the townspeople, the little squires, the magistrature, and the "clericals" (as the *Constitutionnel* used to say), all threw the blame upon Mme. du Bousquier. M. du Bousquier had married such an elderly wife, they said; and besides, how lucky it was for her, poor thing, for at her age bearing a child meant such a risk. If, in periodically recurrent despair, Mme. du Bousquier confided her troubles with tears to Mme. du Coudrai or Mme. du Ronceret—

"Why you must be mad, dear!" those ladies would reply. "You do not know what you want; a child would be the death of you."

Men like M. du Coudrai, who followed du Bousquier's lead because they fastened their hopes to his success, would prompt their wives to sing du Bousquier's praises; and Rose must listen to speeches that wounded like a stab.

"You are very fortunate, dear, to have such a capable husband; some men have no energy, and can neither manage their own property nor bring up their children; you are spared these troubles."

Or, "Your husband is making you queen of the district, fair lady. *He* will never leave you at a loss; he does everything in Alençon."

"But I should like him to take less trouble for the public and rather——"

"My dear Mme. du Bousquier, you are very hard to please; all the women envy you your husband."

Unjustly treated by a world which condemned her without a hearing, she found ample scope for the exercise of Christian virtues in her inner life. She who lived in tears always turned a serene face upon the world. For her, pious soul, was there not sin in the thought which was always pecking at her heart—"I loved the Chevalier de Valois, and I am du Bousquier's wife!" Athanase's love rose up like a remorse to haunt her dreams. After her uncle's death and the revelation of all that he had suffered, the future grew yet more dreadful as she thought how grieved he would have been by such changes of political and religious doctrine. Unhappiness often falls like a thunderbolt, as upon Mme. Granson, for instance; but Rose's misery gradually widened out before her as a drop of oil spreads over stuff, slowly saturating every fibre.

The Chevalier de Valois was the malignant artificer of her misfortune. He had it on his mind to snatch his opportunity and undeceive Mme. du Bousquier as to one of her articles of faith; for the Chevalier, a man of experience, saw through du Bousquier the married man, as he had seen through du Bous-

quier the bachelor. But it was not easy to take the astute Republican by surprise. His salon, naturally, was closed to the Chevalier de Valois, as to all others who discontinued their visits to the Maison Cormon at the time of his marriage. And besides, du Bousquier was above the reach of ridicule; he possessed an immense fortune, he was king of Alençon; and as for his wife, he cared about her much as Richard III. might have cared for the loss of the horse with which he thought to win the battle. To please her husband, Mme. du Bousquier had broken with the Maison d'Esgrignon, but sometimes, when he was away at Paris for a few days, she paid Mlle. Armande a visit.

Two years after Mme. du Bousquier's marriage, just at the time of the Abbé's death, Mlle. Armande went up to her as she came out of church. Both women had been to St. Leonard's to hear a *messe noire* said for M. de Sponde; and Mlle. Armande, a generous-natured woman, thinking that she ought to try to comfort the weeping heiress, walked with her as far as the Parade. From the Parade, still talking of the beloved and lost, they came to the forbidden Hôtel d'Esgrignon, and Mlle. Armande drew Mme. du Bousquier into the house by the charm of her talk. Perhaps the poor broken-hearted woman loved to speak of her uncle with some one whom her uncle had loved so well. And besides, she wished to receive the old Marquis' greetings after an interval of nearly three years. It was half-past one o'clock; the Chevalier de Valois had come to dinner, and with a bow he held out both hands.

"Ah! well, dear, good, and well-beloved lady," he said tremulously, "*we* have lost our sainted friend. Your mourning is ours. Yes; your loss is felt as deeply here as under your roof —more deeply," he added, alluding to du Bousquier.

A funeral oration followed, to which every one contributed his phrase; then the Chevalier, gallantly taking the lady's hand, drew it under his arm, pressed it in the most adorable way, and led her aside into the embrasure of a window.

"You are happy, at any rate?" he asked with a fatherly tone in his voice.

"Yes," she said, lowering her eyes.

Hearing that "Yes," Mme. de Troisville (daughter of the Princess Scherbelloff) and the old Marquise de Castéran came up; Mlle. Armande also joined them, and the group took a turn in the garden till dinner should be ready. Mme. du Bousquier was so stupid with grief that she did not notice that a little conspiracy of curiosity was on foot among the ladies.

"We have her here, let us find out the answer to the riddle," the glances exchanged among them seemed to say.

"You should have children to make your happiness complete," began Mlle. Armande, "a fine boy like my nephew ——"

Tears came to Mme. du Bousquier's eyes.

"I have heard it said that it was entirely your own fault if you had none," said the Chevalier, "that you were afraid of the risk."

"*I!*" she cried, innocently; "I would endure a hundred years in hell to have a child."

The subject thus broached, Mme. la Vicomtesse de Troisville and the dowager Marquise de Castéran steered the conversation with such exceeding tact, that they entangled poor Rose until, all unsuspectingly, she revealed the secrets of her married life. Mlle. Armande laid her hand on the Chevalier's arm, and they left the three matrons to talk confidentially. Then Mme. du Bousquier's mind was disabused with regard to the deception of her marriage; and as she was still "a natural," she amused her confidantes with her irresistible naïveté. Before long the whole town was in the secret of du Bousquier's manœuvres, and knew that Mlle. Cormon's marriage was a mockery; but after the first burst of laughter, Mme. du Bousquier gained the esteem and sympathy of every woman in it. While Mlle. Cormon rushed unsuccessfully at opportunities of establishing herself, every one had laughed; but people admired her when they knew the position in which she was placed by the severity of her religious principles. "Poor, dear Mlle. Cormon!" was replaced by "poor Mme. du Bousquier!"

In this way the Chevalier made du Bousquier both ridiculous and very unpopular for a while, but the ridicule died down with time; the slander languished when everybody had cut his joke; and besides, it seemed to many persons that the mute Republican had a right to retire at the age of fifty-seven. But if du Bousquier previously hated the Maison d'Esgrignon, this incident so increased his rancor that he was pitiless afterwards in the day of vengeance. Mme. du Bousquier received orders never to set foot in that house again; and by way of reprisals, he inserted the following paragraph in the *Orne Courier,* his own new paper:

"A Reward of *rente* to bring in a thousand francs will be paid to any person who shall prove that one M. de Pombreton existed either before or after the Emigration."

Though Mme. du Bousquier's happiness was essentially negative, she saw that her marriage had its advantages. Was it not better to take an interest in the most remarkable man in the place than to live alone? After all, du Bousquier was better than the dogs, cats, and canaries on which old maids centre their affections; and his feeling for his wife was something more genuine and disinterested than the attachment of servants, confessors, and legacy-hunters. At a still later period she looked upon her husband as an instrument in God's hands to punish her for the innumerable sins which she discovered in her desires for marriage; she regarded herself as justly rewarded for the misery which she had brought on Mme. Granson, and for hastening her own uncle's end. Obedient to a religious faith which bade her kiss the rod, she praised her husband in public; but in the confessional, or over her prayers at night, she often wept and entreated God to pardon the apostate who said one thing and thought another, who wished for the destruction of the order of nobles and the Church, the two religions of the Maison Cormon. Living in an uncongenial atmosphere, compelled to suppress herself, compelled likewise by a sense of duty to make her husband

happy, and to injure him in nothing, she became attached to him with an indefinable affection, perhaps the result of use and wont. Her life was a perpetual contradiction. She felt the strongest aversion for the conduct and opinions of the man she had married, and yet it was her duty to take a tender interest in him; and if, as often happened, du Bousquier ate her preserves, or thought that the dinner was good, she was in the seventh heaven. She saw that his comfort was secured even in the smallest details. If he left the wrapper of his newspaper on the table, there it must remain.

"Leave it, René," she would say, "the master had some reason for putting it there."

Did du Bousquier go on a journey? She fidgeted over his traveling cloak and his linen; she took the most minute precautions for his material comfort. If he was going over to the Prébaudet, she began to consult the weather glass twenty-four hours beforehand. A sleeping dog has eyes and ears for his master, and so it was with Mme. du Bousquier; she used to watch the expression of her husband's face to read his wishes. And if that burly personage, vanquished by duty-prescribed love, caught her by the waist and kissed her on the forehead, exclaiming, "You are a good woman!" tears of joy filled the poor creature's eyes. It is probable that du Bousquier felt it incumbent upon him to make compensations which won Rose Marie Victoire's respect; for the Church does not require that an assumption of wifely devotion should be carried quite so far as Mme. du Bousquier thought necessary. And yet when she listened to the rancorous talk of men who took Constitutional-Royalism as a cloak for their real opinions, the woman of saintly life uttered not a word. She foresaw the downfall of the Church, and shuddered. Very occasionally she would hazard some foolish remark, promptly cut in two by a look from du Bousquier. In the end this life at cross-purposes had a benumbing influence on Mme. du Bousquier's wits; she found it both simpler and more dignified to keep her mind to herself, and led outwardly a mere animal existence. She grew slavishly submissive, making a virtue of the abject condition

to which her husband had reduced her; she did her husband's will without murmuring in the least. The timid sheep walked in the way marked out by the shepherd; never leaving the bosom of the Church, practising austerities, without a thought of the Devil, his pomps and works. And so, within herself she united the purest Christian virtues, and du Bousquier truly was one of the luckiest men in the kingdom of France and Navarre.

"She will be a simpleton till her last sigh," said the cruel ex-registrar (now cashiered). But, all the same, he dined at her table twice a week.

The story would be singularly incomplete if it omitted to mention a last coincidence; the Chevalier de Valois and Suzanne's mother died at the same time.

The Chevalier died with the Monarchy in August 1830. He went to Nonancourt to join the funeral procession; piously making one of the King's escort to Cherbourg, with the Troisvilles, Castérans, d'Esgrignons, Verneuils, and the rest. He had brought with him his little hoard of savings and the principal which brought him in his annual income, some fifty thousand francs in all, which he offered to a faithful friend of the elder branch to convey to His Majesty. His own death was very near, he said; the money had come to him through the King's bounty; and, after all, the property of the last of the Valois belonged to the Crown. History does not say whether the Chevalier's fervent zeal overcame the repugnance of the Bourbon who left his fair kingdom of France without taking one farthing into exile; but the King surely must have been touched by the old noble's devotion; and this much is at least certain—Césarine, M. de Valois' universal legatee, inherited scarcely six hundred livres of income at his death. The Chevalier came back to Alençon, broken-hearted and spent with the fatigue of the journey, to die just as Charles X. set foot on foreign soil.

Mme. du Val-Noble and her journalist protector, fearing reprisals from the Liberals, were glad of an excuse to return *incognito* to the village where the old mother died. Suzanne

attended the sale of the Chevalier's furniture to buy some relic of her first good friend, and ran up the price of the snuff-box to the enormous amount of a thousand francs. The Princess Goritza's portrait alone was worth that sum. Two years afterwards, a young man of fashion, struck with its marvelous workmanship, obtained it of Suzanne for his collection of fine eighteenth century snuff-boxes; and so the delicate toy which had been the confidant of the most courtly of love affairs, and the delight of an old age till its very end, is now brought into the semi-publicity of a collection. If the dead could know what is done after they are gone, there would be a flush at this moment on the Chevalier's left cheek.

If this history should inspire owners of sacred relics with a holy fear, and set them drafting codicils to provide for the fate of such precious souvenirs of a happiness now no more, by giving them into sympathetic hands; even so an enormous service would have been rendered to the chivalrous and sentimental section of the public; but it contains another and a much more exalted moral. . . . Does it not show that a new branch of education is needed? Is it not an appeal to the so enlightened solicitude of Ministers of Public Instruction to create chairs of anthropology, a science in which Germany is outstripping us?

Modern myths are even less understood of the people than ancient myths, eaten up with myths though we may be. Fables crowd in upon us on every side, allegory is pressed into service on all occasions to explain everything. If fables are the torches of history, as the humanist school maintains, they may be a means of securing empires from revolution, if only professors of history will undertake that their interpretations thereof shall permeate the masses in the departments. If Mlle. Cormon had had some knowledge of literature; if there had been a professor of anthropology in the department of the Orne; if (a final if) she had read her Ariosto, would the appalling misfortune of her marriage have befallen her? She would, perhaps, have found out for herself why the Italian poet makes his heroine Angelica prefer Medoro (a suave

Chevalier de Valois) to Orlando, who had lost his mare, and could do nothing but work himself into a fury. Might not Medoro be taken as an allegorical figure as the courtier of woman's sovereignty, whereas Orlando is revolution personified, an undisciplined, furious, purely destructive force, incapable of producing anything? This is the opinion of one of M. Ballanche's pupils; we publish it, declining all responsibility.

As for the tiny negroes' heads, no information of any kind concerning them is forthcoming. Mme. du Val-Noble you may see any day at the Opera. Thanks to the primary education given to her by the Chevalier de Valois, she looks almost like a woman who makes a necessity of virtue, while in truth she only exists by virtue of necessity.

Mme. du Bousquier is still living, which is to say, is it not, that her troubles are not yet over? At sixty, when women can permit themselves to make admissions, talking confidentially to Mme. du Coudrai, whose husband was reinstated in August 1830, she said that the thought that she must die without knowing what it was to be a wife and mother was more than she could bear

PARIS, *October* 1836.

THE COLLECTION OF ANTIQUITIES

To Baron Von Hammer-Purgstall
Member of the Aulic Council, Author of the History of the Ottoman Empire.

Dear Baron,—You have taken so warm an interest in my long, vast "History of French Manners in the Nineteenth Century," you have given me so much encouragement to persevere with my work, that you have given me a right to associate your name with some portion of it. Are you not one of the most important representatives of conscientious, studious Germany? Will not your approval win for me the approval of others, and protect this attempt of mine? So proud am I to have gained your good opinion, that I have striven to deserve it by continuing my labors with the unflagging courage characteristic of your methods of study, and of that exhaustive research among documents without which you could never have given your monumental work to the world of letters. Your sympathy with such labor as you yourself have bestowed upon the most brilliant civilization of the East, has often sustained my ardor through nights of toil given to the details of our modern civilization. And will not you, whose naïve kindliness can only be compared with that of our own La Fontaine, be glad to know of this?

May this token of my respect for you and your work find you at Dobling, dear Baron, and put you and yours in mind of one of your most sincere admirers and friends. DE BALZAC.

THERE stands a house at a corner of a street, in the middle of a town, in one of the least important prefectures in France, but the name of the street and the name of the town must be suppressed here. Every one will appreciate the motives of this sage reticence demanded by convention; for if a writer takes upon himself the office of annalist of his own time, he is bound to touch on many sore subjects. The house was called the Hôtel d'Esgrignon; but let d'Esgrignon be considered a mere fancy name, neither more nor less connected with real people than the conventional Belval, Floricour, or Derville of the stage, or the Adalberts and Mombreuses of romance. After all, the names of the principal characters will be quite as much disguised; for though in this history the chronicler would prefer to conceal the facts under a mass of contradictions, anachronisms, improbabilities, and absurdities, the truth will out in spite of him. You uproot a vine-stock, as you imagine, and the stem will send up lusty shoots after you have ploughed your vineyard over.

The "Hôtel d'Esgrignon" was nothing more nor less than the house in which the old Marquis lived; or, in the style of ancient documents, Charles Marie Victor Ange Carol, Marquis d'Esgrignon. It was only an ordinary house, but the townspeople and tradesmen had begun by calling it the Hôtel d'Esgrignon in jest, and ended after a score of years by giving it that name in earnest.

The name of Carol, or Karawl, as the Thierrys would have spelt it, was glorious among the names of the most powerful chieftains of the Northmen who conquered Gaul and established the feudal system there. Never had Carol bent his head before King or Communes, the Church or Finance. Intrusted in the days of yore with the keeping of a French March, the title of marquis in their family meant no shadow of imaginary office; it had been a post of honor with duties to discharge. Their fief had always been their domain. Provincial nobles were they in every sense of the word; they might boast of an unbroken line of great descent; they had been neglected by the court for two hundred years; they were

lords paramount in the estates of a province where the people looked up to them with superstitious awe, as to the image of the Holy Virgin that cures the toothache. The house of d'Esgrignon, buried in its remote border country, was preserved as the charred piles of one of Cæsar's bridges are maintained intact in a river bed. For thirteen hundred years the daughters of the house had been married without a dowry or taken the veil; the younger sons of every generation had been content with their share of their mother's dower and gone forth to be captains or bishops; some had made a marriage at court; one cadet of the house became an admiral, a duke, and a peer of France, and died without issue. Never would the Marquis d'Esgrignon of the elder branch accept the title of duke.

"I hold my marquisate as His Majesty holds the realm of France, and on the same conditions," he told the Constable de Luynes, a very paltry fellow in his eyes at that time.

You may be sure that d'Esgrignons lost their heads on the scaffold during the troubles. The old blood showed itself proud and high even in 1789. The Marquis of that day would not emigrate; he was answerable for his March. The reverence in which he was held by the countryside saved his head; but the hatred of the genuine *sans-culottes* was strong enough to compel him to pretend to fly, and for a while he lived in hiding. Then, in the name of the Sovereign People, the d'Esgrignon lands were dishonored by the District, and the woods sold by the Nation in spite of the personal protest made by the Marquis, then turned of forty. Mlle. d'Esgrignon, his half-sister, saved some portions of the fief, thanks to the young steward of the family, who claimed on her behalf the *partage de présuccession*, which is to say, the right of a relative to a portion of an émigré's lands. To Mlle. d'Esgrignon, therefore, the Republic made over the castle itself and a few farms. Chesnel, the faithful steward, was obliged to buy in his own name the church, the parsonage house, the castle gardens, and other places to which his patron was attached—the Marquis advancing the money.

The slow, swift years of the Terror went by, and the Marquis, whose character had won the respect of the whole country, decided that he and his sister ought to return to the castle and improve the property which Maître Chesnel—for he was now a notary—had contrived to save for them out of the wreck. Alas! was not the plundered and dismantled castle all too vast for a lord of the manor shorn of all his ancient rights; too large for the landowner whose woods had been sold piecemeal, until he could scarce draw nine thousand francs of income from the pickings of his old estates?

It was in the month of October 1800 that Chesnel brought the Marquis back to the old feudal castle, and saw with deep emotion, almost beyond control, his patron standing in the midst of the empty courtyard, gazing round upon the moat, now filled up with rubbish, and the castle towers razed to the level of the roof. The descendant of the Franks looked for the missing Gothic turrets and the picturesque weather vanes which used to rise above them; and his eyes turned to the sky, as if asking of heaven the reason of this social upheaval. No one but Chesnel could understand the profound anguish of the great d'Esgrignon, now known as Citizen Carol. For a long while the Marquis stood in silence, drinking in the influences of the place, the ancient home of his forefathers, with the air that he breathed; then he flung out a most melancholy exclamation.

"Chesnel," he said, "we will come back again some day when the troubles are over; I could not bring myself to live here until the edict of pacification has been published; *they* will not allow me to set my scutcheon on the wall."

He waved his hand toward the castle, mounted his horse, and rode back beside his sister, who had driven over in the notary's shabby basket-chaise.

The Hôtel d'Esgrignon in the town had been demolished; a couple of factories now stood on the site of the aristocrat's house. So Maître Chesnel spent the Marquis' last bag of louis on the purchase of the old-fashioned building in the square, with its gables, weather-vane, turret, and dovecote.

Once it had been the courthouse of the bailiwick, and subsequently the *présidial;* it had belonged to the d'Esgrignons from generation to generation; and now, in consideration of five hundred louis d'or, the present owner made it over with the title given by the Nation to its rightful lord. And so, half in jest, half in earnest, the old house was christened the Hôtel d'Esgrignon.

In 1800 little or no difficulty was made over erasing names from the fatal list, and some few émigrés began to return. Among the very first nobles to come back to the old town were the Baron de Nouastre and his daughter. They were completely ruined. M. d'Esgrignon generously offered them the shelter of his roof; and in his house, two months later, the Baron died, worn out with grief. The Nouastres came of the best blood of the province; Mlle. de Nouastre was a girl of two-and-twenty; the Marquis d'Esgrignon married her to continue his line. But she died in childbirth, a victim to the unskilfulness of her physician, leaving, most fortunately, a son to bear the name of the d'Esgrignons. The old Marquis—he was but fifty-three, but adversity and sharp distress had added months to every year—the poor old Marquis saw the death of the loveliest of human creatures, a noble woman in whom the charm of the feminine figures of the sixteenth century lived again, a charm now lost save to men's imaginations. With her death the joy died out of his old age. It was one of those terrible shocks which reverberate through every moment of the years that follow. For a few moments he stood beside the bed where his wife lay, with her hands folded like a saint, then he kissed her on the forehead, turned away, drew out his watch, broke the mainspring, and hung it up beside the hearth. It was eleven o'clock in the morning.

"Mlle. d'Esgrignon," he said, "let us pray God that this hour may not prove fatal yet again to our house. My uncle the archbishop was murdered at this hour; at this hour also my father died——"

He knelt down beside the bed and buried his face in the

coverlet; his sister did the same, in another moment they both rose to their feet. Mlle. d'Esgrignon burst into tears; but the old Marquis looked with dry eyes at the child, round the room, and again on his dead wife. To the stubbornness of the Frank he united the fortitude of a Christian.

These things came to pass in the second year of the nineteenth century. Mlle. d'Esgrignon was then twenty-seven years of age. She was a beautiful woman. An ex-contractor for forage to the armies of the Republic, a man of the district, with an income of six thousand francs, persuaded Chesnel to carry a proposal of marriage to the lady. The Marquis and his sister were alike indignant with such presumption in their man of business, and Chesnel was almost heartbroken; he could not forgive himself for yielding to the Sieur du Croisier's blandishments. The Marquis' manner with his old servant changed somewhat; never again was there quite the old affectionate kindliness, which might almost have been taken for friendship. From that time forth the Marquis was grateful, and his magnanimous and sincere gratitude continually wounded the poor notary's feelings. To some sublime natures gratitude seems an excessive payment; they would rather have that sweet equality of feeling which springs from similar ways of thought, and the blending of two spirits by their own choice and will. And Maître Chesnel had known the delights of such high friendship; the Marquis had raised him to his own level. The old noble looked on the good notary as something more than a servant, something less than a child; he was the voluntary liege man of the house, a serf bound to his lord by all the ties of affection. There was no balancing of obligations; the sincere affection on either side put them out of the question.

In the eyes of the Marquis, Chesnel's official dignity was as nothing; his old servitor was merely disguised as a notary. As for Chesnel, the Marquis was now, as always, a being of a divine race; he believed in nobility; he did not blush to remember that his father had thrown open the doors of the salon to announce that "My Lord Marquis is served." His

devotion to the fallen house was due not so much to his creed as to egoism; he looked on himself as one of the family. So his vexation was intense. Once he had ventured to allude to his mistake in spite of the Marquis' prohibition, and the old noble answered gravely—"Chesnel, before the troubles you would not have permitted yourself to entertain such injurious suppositions. What can these new doctrines be if they have spoiled *you?*"

Maître Chesnel had gained the confidence of the whole town; people looked up to him; his high integrity and considerable fortune contributed to make him a person of importance. From that time forth he felt a very decided aversion for the Sieur du Croisier; and though there was little rancor in his composition, he set others against the sometime forage-contractor. Du Croisier, on the other hand, was a man to bear a grudge and nurse a vengeance for a score of years. He hated Chesnel and the d'Esgrignon family with the smothered, all-absorbing hate only to be found in a country town. His rebuff had simply ruined him with the malicious provincials among whom he had come to live, thinking to rule over them. It was so real a disaster that he was not long in feeling the consequences of it. He betook himself in desperation to a wealthy old maid, and met with a second refusal. Thus failed the ambitious schemes with which he had started. He had lost his hope of a marriage with Mlle. d'Esgrignon, which would have opened the Faubourg Saint-Germain of the province to him; and after the second rejection, his credit fell away to such an extent that it was almost as much as he could do to keep his position in the second rank.

In 1805, M. de la Roche-Guyon, the oldest son of an ancient family which had previously intermarried with the d'Esgrignons, made proposals in form through Maître Chesnel for Mlle. Marie Armande Claire d'Esgrignon. She declined to hear the notary.

"You must have guessed before now that I am a mother, dear Chesnel," she said; she had just put her nephew, a fine little boy of five, to bed.

The old Marquis rose and went up to his sister, but just returned from the cradle; he kissed her hand reverently, and as he sat down again, found words to say:

"My sister, you are a d'Esgrignon."

A quiver ran through the noble girl; the tears stood in her eyes. M. d'Esgrignon, the father of the present Marquis, had married a second wife, the daughter of a farmer of taxes ennobled by Louis XIV. It was a shocking *mésalliance* in the eyes of his family, but fortunately of no importance, since a daughter was the one child of the marriage. Armande knew this. Kind as her brother had always been, he looked on her as a stranger in blood. And this speech of his had just recognized her as one of the family.

And was not her answer the worthy crown of eleven years of her noble life? Her every action since she came of age had borne the stamp of the purest devotion; love for her brother was a sort of religion with her.

"I shall die Mlle. d'Esgrignon," she said simply, turning to the notary.

"For you there could be no fairer title," returned Chesnel, meaning to convey a compliment. Poor Mlle. d'Esgrignon reddened.

"You have blundered, Chesnel," said the Marquis, flattered by the steward's words, but vexed that his sister had been hurt. "A d'Esgrignon may marry a Montmorency; their descent is not so pure as ours. The d'Esgrignons bear *or, two bends, gules,*" he continued, "and nothing during nine hundred years has changed their scutcheon; as it was at first, so it is to-day. Hence our device, *Cil est nostre,* taken at a tournament in the reign of Philip Augustus, with the supporters, a knight in armor *or* on the right, and a lion *gules* on the left."

"I do not remember that any woman I have ever met has struck my imagination as Mlle. d'Esgrignon did," said Émile Blondet, to whom contemporary literature is indebted for this history among other things. "Truth to tell, I was a

boy, a mere child at the time, and perhaps my memory-pictures of her owe something of their vivid color to a boy's natural turn for the marvelous.

"If I was playing with other children on the Parade, and she came to walk there with her nephew Victurnien, the sight of her in the distance thrilled me with very much the effect of galvanism on a dead body. Child as I was, I felt as though new life had been given me.

"Mlle. Armande had hair of tawny gold; there was a delicate fine down on her cheek, with a silver gleam upon it which I loved to catch, putting myself so that I could see the outlines of her face lit up by the daylight, and feel the fascination of those dreamy emerald eyes, which sent a flash of fire through me whenever they fell upon my face. I used to pretend to roll on the grass before her in our games, only to try to reach her little feet, and admire them on a closer view. The soft whiteness of her skin, her delicate features, the clearly cut lines of her forehead, the grace of her slender figure, took me with a sense of surprise, while as yet I did not know that her shape was graceful, nor her brows beautiful, nor the outline of her face a perfect oval. I admired as children pray at that age, without too clearly understanding why they pray. When my piercing gaze attracted her notice, when she asked me (in that musical voice of hers, with more volume in it, as it seemed to me, than all other voices), 'What are you doing, little one? Why do you look at me?'—I used to come nearer and wriggle and bite my finger-nails, and redden and say, 'I do not know.' And if she chanced to stroke my hair with her white hand, and ask me how old I was, I would run away and call from a distance, 'Eleven!'

"Every princess and fairy of my visions, as I read the *Arabian Nights,* looked and walked like Mlle. d'Esgrignon; and afterwards, when my drawing-master gave me heads from the antique to copy, I noticed that their hair was braided like Mlle. d'Esgrignon's. Still later, when the foolish fancies had vanished one by one, Mlle. Armande remained vaguely in my memory as a type; that Mlle. Armande for whom men made

way respectfully, following the tall brown-robed figure with their eyes along the Parade and out of sight. Her exquisitely graceful form, the rounded curves sometimes revealed by a chance gust of wind, and always visible to my eyes in spite of the ample folds of stuff, revisited my young man's dreams. Later yet, when I came to think seriously over certain mysteries of human thought, it seemed to me that the feeling of reverence was first inspired in me by something expressed in Mlle. d'Esgrignon's face and bearing. The wonderful calm of her face, the suppressed passion in it, the dignity of her movements, the saintly life of duties fulfilled, —all this touched and awed me. Children are more susceptible than people imagine to the subtle influences of ideas; they never make game of real dignity; they feel the charm of real graciousness, and beauty attracts them, for childhood itself is beautiful, and there are mysterious ties between things of the same nature.

"Mlle. d'Esgrignon was one of my religions. To this day I can never climb the staircase of some old manor-house but my foolish imagination must needs picture Mlle. Armande standing there, like the spirit of feudalism. I can never read old chronicles but she appears before my eyes in the shape of some famous woman of old times; she is Agnès Sorel, Marie Touchet, Gabrielle; and I lend her all the love that was lost in her heart, all the love that she never expressed. The angel shape seen in glimpses through the haze of childish fancies visits me now sometimes across the mists of dreams."

Keep this portrait in mind; it is a faithful picture and sketch of character. Mlle. d'Esgrignon is one of the most instructive figures in this story; she affords an example of the mischief that may be done by the purest goodness for lack of intelligence.

Two-thirds of the émigrés returned to France during 1804 and 1805, and almost every exile from the Marquis d'Esgrignon's province came back to the land of his fathers. There

were certainly defections. Men of good birth entered the service of Napoleon, and went into the army or held places at the Imperial court, and others made alliances with the upstart families. All those who cast in their lots with the Empire retrieved their fortunes and recovered their estates, thanks to the Emperor's munificence; and these for the most part went to Paris and stayed there. But some eight or nine families still remained true to the proscribed noblesse and loyal to the fallen monarchy. The La Roche-Guyons, Nouastres, Verneuils, Castérans, Troisvilles, and the rest were some of them rich, some of them poor; but money, more or less, scarcely counted for anything among them. They took an antiquarian view of themselves; for them the age and preservation of the pedigree was the one all-important matter; precisely as, for an amateur, the weight of metal in a coin is a small matter in comparison with clean lettering, a flawless stamp, and high antiquity. Of these families, the Marquis d'Esgrignon was the acknowledged head. His house became their *cénacle*. There His Majesty, Emperor and King, was never anything but "M. de Bonaparte"; there "the King" meant Louis XVIII., then at Mittau; there the Department was still the Province, and the prefecture the *intendance*.

The Marquis was honored among them for his admirable behavior, his loyalty as a noble, his undaunted courage; even as he was respected throughout the town for his misfortunes, his fortitude, his steadfast adherence to his political convictions. The man so admirable in adversity was invested with all the majesty of ruined greatness. His chivalrous fair-mindedness was so well known, that litigants many a time had referred their disputes to him for arbitration. All gently bred Imperalists and the authorities themselves showed as much indulgence for his prejudices as respect for his personal character; but there was another and a large section of the new society which was destined to be known after the Restoration as the Liberal party; and these, with du Croisier as their unacknowledged head, laughed at an aristocratic oasis

which nobody might enter without proof of irreproachable descent. Their animosity was all the more bitter because honest country squires and the higher officials, with a good many worthy folk in the town, were of the opinion that all the best society thereof was to be found in the Marquis d'Esgrignon's salon. The prefect himself, the Emperor's chamberlain, made overtures to the d'Esgrignons, humbly sending his wife (a Grandlieu) as ambassadress.

Wherefore, those excluded from the miniature provincial Faubourg Saint-Germain nicknamed the salon "The Collection of Antiquities," and called the Marquis himself "M. Carol." The receiver of taxes, for instance, addressed his applications to "M. Carol (*ci-devant* des Grignons)," maliciously adopting the obsolete way of spelling.

"For my own part," said Émile Blondet, "if I try to recall my childhood memories, I remember that the nickname of 'Collection of Antiquities' always made me laugh, in spite of my respect—my love, I ought to say—for Mlle. d'Esgrignon. The Hôtel d'Esgrignon stood at the angle of two of the busiest thoroughfares in the town, and not five hundred paces away from the market place. Two of the drawing-room windows looked upon the street and two upon the square; the room was like a glass cage, every one who came past could look through it from side to side. I was only a boy of twelve at the time, but I thought, even then, that the salon was one of those rare curiosities which seem, when you come to think of them afterwards, to lie just on the borderland between reality and dreams, so that you can scarcely tell to which side they most belong.

"The room, the ancient Hall of Audience, stood above a row of cellars with grated air-holes, once the prison cells of the old court-house, now converted into a kitchen. I do not know that the magnificent lofty chimney-piece of the Louvre, with its marvelous carving, seemed more wonderful to me than the vast open hearth of the salon d'Esgrignon when I saw it for the first time. It was covered like a

melon with a network of tracery. Over it stood an equestrian portrait of Henri III., under whom the ancient duchy of appanage reverted to the crown; it was a great picture executed in low relief, and set in a carved and gilded frame. The ceiling spaces between the chestnut cross-beams in the fine old roof were decorated with scroll-work patterns; there was a little faded gilding still left along the angles. The walls were covered with Flemish tapestry, six scenes from the Judgment of Solomon, framed in golden garlands, with satyrs and cupids playing among the leaves. The parquet floor had been laid down by the present Marquis, and Chesnel had picked up the furniture at sales of the wreckage of old châteaux between 1793 and 1795; so that there were Louis Quatorze consoles, tables, clock-cases, andirons, candle-sconces and tapestry-covered chairs, which marvelously completed a stately room, large out of all proportion to the house. Luckily, however, there was an equally lofty ante-chamber, the ancient Salle des Pas Perdus of the présidial, which communicated likewise with the magistrate's deliberating chamber, used by the d'Esgrignons as a dining-room.

"Beneath the old paneling, amid the threadbare braveries of a bygone day, some eight or ten dowagers were drawn up in state in a quavering line; some with palsied heads, others dark and shriveled like mummies; some erect and stiff, others bowed and bent, but all of them tricked out in more or less fantastic costumes as far as possible removed from the fashion of the day, with be-ribboned caps above their curled and powdered 'heads,' and old discolored lace. No painter however earnest, no caricature however wild, ever caught the haunting fascination of those aged women; they come back to me in dreams; their puckered faces shape themselves in my memory whenever I meet an old woman who puts me in mind of them by some faint resemblance of dress or feature. And whether it is that misfortune has initiated me into the secrets of irremediable and overwhelming disaster; whether that I have come to understand the whole range of human feelings, and, best of all, the thoughts of Old Age and Regret;

whatever the reason, nowhere and never again have I seen among the living or in the faces of the dying the wan look of certain gray eyes that I remember, nor the dreadful brightness of others that were black.

"Neither Hoffmann nor Maturin, the two weirdest imaginations of our time, ever gave me such a thrill of terror as I used to feel when I watched the automaton movements of those bodies sheathed in whalebone. The paint on actors' faces never caused me a shock; I could see below it the rouge in grain, the *rouge de naissance,* to quote a comrade at least as malicious as I can be. Years had leveled those women's faces, and at the same time furrowed them with wrinkles, till they looked like the heads on wooden nutcrackers carved in Germany. Peeping in through the window-panes, I gazed at the battered bodies, and ill-jointed limbs (how they were fastened together, and, indeed, their whole anatomy was a mystery I never attempted to explain) ; I saw the lantern jaws, the protuberant bones, the abnormal development of the hips; and the movements of these figures as they came and went seemed to me no whit less extraordinary than their sepulchral immobility as they sat round the card-tables.

"The men looked gray and faded like the ancient tapestries on the wall, in dress they were much more like the men of the day, but even they were not altogether convincingly alive. Their white hair, their withered waxen-hued faces, their devastated foreheads and pale eyes, revealed their kinship to the women, and neutralized any effects of reality borrowed from their costume.

"The very certainty of finding all these folk seated at or among the tables every day at the same hours invested them at length in my eyes with a sort of spectacular interest as it were; there was something theatrical, something unearthly about them.

"Whenever, in after times, I have gone through museums of old furniture in Paris, London, Munich, or Vienna, with the gray-headed custodian who shows you the splendors of time past, I have peopled the rooms with figures from the

Collection of Antiquities. Often, as little schoolboys of eight or ten we used to propose to go and take a look at the curiosities in their glass cage, for the fun of the thing But as soon as I caught sight of Mlle. Armande's sweet face, I used to tremble; and there was a trace of jealousy in my admiration for the lovely child Victurnien, who belonged, as we all instinctively felt, to a different and higher order of being from our own. It struck me as something indescribably strange that the young fresh creature should be there in that cemetery awakened before the time. We could not have explained our thoughts to ourselves, yet we felt that we were bourgeois and insignificant in the presence of that proud court."

The disasters of 1813 and 1814, which brought about the downfall of Napoleon, gave new life to the Collection of Antiquities, and what was more than life, the hope of recovering their past importance; but the events of 1815, the troubles of the foreign occupation, and the vacillating policy of the Government until the fall of M. Decazes, all contributed to defer the fulfilment of the expectations of the personages so vividly described by Blondet. This story, therefore, only begins to shape itself in 1822.

In 1822 the Marquis d'Esgrignon's fortunes had not improved in spite of the changes worked by the Restoration in the condition of émigrés. Of all nobles hardly hit by Revolutionary legislation, his case was the hardest. Like other great families, the d'Esgrignons before 1789 derived the greater part of their income from their rights as lords of the manor in the shape of dues paid by those who held of them; and, naturally, the old *seigneurs* had reduced the size of the holdings in order to swell the amounts paid in quit-rents and heriots. Families in this position were hopelessly ruined. They were not affected by the ordinance by which Louis XVIII. put the émigrés into possession of such of their lands as had not been sold; and at a later date it was impossible that the law of indemnity should indemnify them. Their sup-

pressed rights, as everybody knows, were revived in the shape of a land tax known by the very name of *domaines,* but the money went into the coffers of the State.

The Marquis by his position belonged to that small section of the Royalist party which would hear of no kind of compromise with those whom they styled, not Revolutionaries, but revolted subjects, or, in more parliamentary language, they had no dealings with Liberals or Constitutionnels. Such Royalists, nicknamed *Ultras* by the opposition, took for leaders and heroes those courageous orators of the Right, who from the very beginning attempted, with M. de Polignac, to protest against the charter granted by Louis XVIII. This they regarded as an ill-advised edict extorted from the Crown by the necessity of the moment, only to be annulled later on. And, therefore, so far from co-operating with the King to bring about a new condition of things, the Marquis d'Esgrignon stood aloof, an upholder of the straitest sect of the Right in politics, until such time as his vast fortune should be restored to him. Nor did he so much as admit the thought of the indemnity which filled the minds of the Villèle ministry, and formed a part of a design of strengthening the Crown by putting an end to those fatal distinctions of ownership which still lingered on in spite of legislation.

The miracles of the Restoration of 1814, the still greater miracle of Napoleon's return in 1815, the portents of a second flight of the Bourbons, and a second reinstatement (that almost fabulous phase of contemporary history), all these things took the Marquis by surprise at the age of sixty-seven. At that time of life, the most high-spirited men of their age were not so much vanquished as worn out in the struggle with the Revolution; their activity, in their remote provincial retreats, had turned into a passionately held and immovable conviction; and almost all of them were shut in by the enervating, easy round of daily life in the country. Could worse luck befall a political party than this—to be represented by old men at a time when its ideas are already stigmatized as old-fashioned?

When the legitimate sovereign appeared to be firmly seated on the throne again in 1818, the Marquis asked himself what a man of seventy should do at court; and what duties, what office he could discharge there? The noble and high-minded d'Esgrignon was fain to be content with the triumph of the Monarchy and Religion, while he waited for the results of that unhoped-for, indecisive victory, which proved to be simply an armistice. He continued as before, lord-paramount of his salon, so felicitously named the Collection of Antiquities.

But when the victors of 1793 became the vanquished in their turn, the nickname given at first in jest began to be used in bitter earnest. The town was no more free than other country towns from the hatreds and jealousies bred of party spirit. Du Croisier, contrary to all expectation, married the rich old maid who had refused him at first; carrying her off from his rival, the darling of the aristocratic quarter, a certain Chevalier whose illustrious name will be sufficiently hidden by suppressing it altogether, in accordance with the usage formerly adopted in the place itself, where he was known by his title only. He was "the Chevalier" in the town, as the Comte d'Artois was "Monsieur" at court. Now, not only had that marriage produced a war after the provincial manner, in which all weapons are fair; it had hastened the separation of the great and little noblesse, of the aristocratic and bourgeois social elements, which had been united for a little space by the heavy weight of Napoleonic rule. After the pressure was removed, there followed that sudden revival of class divisions which did so much harm to the country.

The most national of all sentiments in France is vanity. The wounded vanity of the many induced a thirst for Equality; though, as the most ardent innovator will some day discover, Equality is an impossibility. The Royalists pricked the Liberals in the most sensitive spots, and this happened especially in the provinces, where either party accused the other of unspeakable atrocities. In those days the blackest

deeds were done in politics, to secure public opinion on one side or another, to catch the votes of that public of fools which holds up hands for those that are clever enough to serve out weapons to them. Individuals are identified with their political opinions, and opponents in public life forthwith become private enemies. It is very difficult in a country town to avoid a man-to-man conflict of this kind over interests or questions which in Paris appear in a more general and theoretical form, with the result that political combatants also rise to a higher level; M. Laffitte, for example, or M. Casimir-Périer can respect M. de Villèle or M. de Peyronnet as a man. M. Laffitte, who drew the fire on the Ministry, would have given them an asylum in his house if they had fled thither on the 29th of July 1830. Benjamin Constant sent a copy of his work on Religion to the Vicomte de Chateaubriand, with a flattering letter acknowledging benefits received from the former Minister. At Paris men are systems, whereas in the provinces systems are identified with men; men, moreover, with restless passions, who must always confront one another, always spy upon each other in private life, and pull their opponents' speeches to pieces, and live generally like two duelists on the watch for a chance to thrust six inches of steel between an antagonist's ribs. Each must do his best to get under his enemy's guard, and a political hatred becomes as all-absorbing as a duel to the death. Epigram and slander are used against individuals to bring the party into discredit.

In such warfare as this, waged ceremoniously and without rancor on the side of the Antiquities, while du Croisier's faction went so far as to use the poisoned weapons of savages —in this warfare the advantages of wit and delicate irony lay on the side of the nobles. But it should never be forgotten that the wounds made by the tongue and the eyes, by gibe or slight, are the last of all to heal. When the Chevalier turned his back on mixed society and entrenched himself on the Mons Sacer of the aristocracy, his witticisms thenceforward were directed at du Croisier's salon; he stirred up the fires of

war, not knowing how far the spirit of revenge was to urge the rival faction. None but purists and loyal gentlemen and women sure one of another entered the Hôtel d'Esgrignon; they committed no indiscretions of any kind; they had their ideas, true or false, good or bad, noble or trivial, but there was nothing to laugh at in all this. If the Liberals meant to make the nobles ridiculous, they were obliged to fasten on the political actions of their opponents; while the intermediate party, composed of officials and others who paid court to the higher powers, kept the nobles informed of all that was done and said in the Liberal camp, and much of it was abundantly laughable. Du Croisier's adherents smarted under a sense of inferiority, which increased their thirst for revenge.

In 1822, du Croisier put himself at the head of the manufacturing interest of the province, as the Marquis d'Esgrignon headed the noblesse. Each represented his party. But du Croisier, instead of giving himself out frankly for a man of the extreme Left, ostensibly adopted the opinions formulated at a later day by the 221 deputies.

By taking up this position, he could keep in touch with the magistrates and local officials and the capitalists of the department. Du Croisier's salon, a power at least equal to the salon d'Esgrignon, larger numerically, as well as younger and more energetic, made itself felt all over the countryside; the Collection of Antiquities, on the other hand, remained inert, a passive appendage, as it were, of a central authority which was often embarrassed by its own partisans; for not merely did they encourage the Government in a mistaken policy, but some of its most fatal blunders were made in consequence of the pressure brought to bear upon it by the Conservative party.

The Liberals, so far, had never contrived to carry their candidate. The department declined to obey their command, knowing that du Croisier, if elected, would take his place on the Left Centre benches, and as far as possible to the Left. Du Croisier was in correspondence with the Brothers Keller, the bankers, the oldest of whom shone conspicuous among

"the nineteen deputies of the Left," that phalanx made famous by the efforts of the entire Liberal press. This same M. Keller, moreover, was related by marriage to the Comte de Gondreville, a Constitutional peer who remained in favor with Louis XVIII. For these reasons, the Constitutional Opposition (as distinct from the Liberal party) was always prepared to vote at the last moment, not for the candidate whom they professed to support, but for du Croisier, if that worthy could succeed in gaining a sufficient number of Royalist votes; but at every election du Croisier was regularly thrown out by the Royalists. The leaders of that party, taking their tone from the Marquis d'Esgrignon, had pretty thoroughly fathomed and gauged their man; and with each defeat, du Croisier and his party waxed more bitter. Nothing so effectually stirs up strife as the failure of some snare set with elaborate pains.

In 1822 there seemed to be a lull in hostilities which had been kept up with great spirit during the first four years of the Restoration. The salon du Croisier and the salon d'Esgrignon, having measured their strength and weakness, were in all probability waiting for opportunity, that Providence of party strife. Ordinary persons were content with the surface quiet which deceived the Government; but those who knew du Croisier better, were well aware that the passion of revenge in him, as in all men whose whole life consists in mental activity, is implacable, especially when political ambitions are involved. About this time du Croisier, who used to turn white and red at the bare mention of d'Esgrignon or the Chevalier, and shuddered at the name of the Collection of Antiquities, chose to wear the impassive countenance of a savage. He smiled upon his enemies, hating them but the more deeply, watching them the more narrowly from hour to hour. One of his own party, who seconded him in these calculations of cold wrath, was the President of the Tribunal, M. du Ronceret, a little country squire, who had vainly endeavored to gain admittance among the Antiquities.

The d'Esgrignons' little fortune, carefully administered by

Maître Chesnel, was barely sufficient for the worthy Marquis' needs; for though he lived without the slightest ostentation, he also lived like a noble. The governor found by his Lordship the Bishop for the hope of the house, the young Comte Victurnien d'Esgrignon, was an elderly Oratorian who must be paid a certain salary, although he lived with the family. The wages of a cook, a waiting-woman for Mlle. Armande, an old valet for M. le Marquis, and a couple of other servants, together with the daily expenses of the household, and the cost of an education for which nothing was spared, absorbed the whole family income, in spite of Mlle. Armande's economies, in spite of Chesnel's careful management, and the servants' affection. As yet, Chesnel had not been able to set about repairs at the ruined castle; he was waiting till the leases fell in to raise the rent of the farms, for rents had been rising lately, partly on account of improved methods of agriculture, partly by the fall in the value of money, of which the landlord would get the benefit at the expiration of leases granted in 1809.

The Marquis himself knew nothing of the details of the management of the house or of his property. He would have been thunderstruck if he had been told of the excessive precautions needed "to make both ends of the year meet in December," to use the housewife's saying, and he was so near the end of his life, that every one shrank from opening his eyes. The Marquis and his adherents believed that a House, to which no one at Court or in the Government gave a thought, a House that was never heard of beyond the gates of the town, save here and there in the same department, was about to revive its ancient greatness, to shine forth in all its glory. The d'Esgrignons' line should appear with renewed lustre in the person of Victurnien, just as the despoiled nobles came into their own again, and the handsome heir to a great estate would be in a position to go to Court, enter the King's service, and marry (as other d'Esgrignons had done before him) a Navarreins, a Cadignan, a d'Uxelles, a Beauséant, a Blamont-Chauvry; a wife, in short, who should unite all

the distinctions of birth and beauty, wit and wealth, and character.

The intimates who came to play their game of cards of an evening—the Troisvilles (pronounced Tréville), the La Roche-Guyons, the Castérans (pronounced Catéran), and the Duc de Verneuil—had all so long been accustomed to look up to the Marquis as a person of immense consequence, that they encouraged him in such notions as these. They were perfectly sincere in their belief; and indeed, it would have been well founded if they could have wiped out the history of the last forty years. But the most honorable and undoubted sanctions of right, such as Louis XVIII. had tried to set on record when he dated the Charter from the one-and-twentieth year of his reign, only exist when ratified by the general consent. The d'Esgrignons not only lacked the very rudiments of the language of latter-day politics, to wit, money, the great modern *relief,* or sufficient rehabilitation of nobility; but, in their case, too, "historical continuity" was lacking, and that is a kind of renown which tells quite as much at Court as on the battlefield, in diplomatic circles as in Parliament, with a book, or in connection with an adventure; it is, as it were, a sacred *ampulla* poured upon the heads of each successive generation. Whereas a noble family, inactive and forgotten, is very much in the position of a hard-featured, poverty-stricken, simple-minded, and virtuous maid, these qualifications being the four cardinal points of misfortune. The marriage of a daughter of the Troisvilles with General Montcornet, so far from opening the eyes of the Antiquities, very nearly brought about a rupture between the Troisvilles and the salon d'Esgrignon, the latter declaring that the Troisvilles were mixing themselves up with all sorts of people.

There was one, and one only, among all these folk who did not share their illusions. And that one, needless to say, was Chesnel the notary. Although his devotion, sufficiently proved already, was simply unbounded for the great house now reduced to three persons; although he accepted all their

ideas, and thought them nothing less than right, he had too much common sense, he was too good a man of business to more than half the families in the department, to miss the significance of the great changes that were taking place in people's minds, or to be blind to the different conditions brought about by industrial development and modern manners. He had watched the Revolution pass through the violent phase of 1793, when men, women, and children wore arms, and heads fell on the scaffold, and victories were won in pitched battles with Europe; and now he saw the same forces quietly at work in men's minds, in the shape of ideas which sanctioned the issues. The soil had been cleared, the seed sown, and now came the harvest. To his thinking, the Revolution had formed the mind of the younger generation; he touched the hard facts, and knew that although there were countless unhealed wounds, what had been done was done past recall. The death of a king on the scaffold, the protracted agony of a queen, the division of the nobles' lands, in his eyes were so many binding contracts; and where so many vested interests were involved, it was not likely that those concerned would allow them to be attacked. Chesnel saw clearly. His fanatical attachment to the d'Esgrignons was whole-hearted, but it was not blind, and it was all the fairer for this. The young monk's faith that sees heaven laid open and beholds the angels, is something far below the power of the old monk who points them out to him. The ex-steward was like the old monk; he would have given his life to defend a worm-eaten shrine.

He tried to explain the "innovations" to his old master, using a thousand tactful precautions; sometimes speaking jestingly, sometimes affecting surprise or sorrow over this or that; but he always met the same prophetic smile on the Marquis' lips, the same fixed conviction in the Marquis' mind, that these follies would go by like others. Events contributed in a way which has escaped attention to assist such noble champions of forlorn hope to cling to their superstitions. What could Chesnel do when the old Marquis said, with a

lordly gesture, "God swept away Bonaparte with his armies, his new great vassals, his crowned kings, and his vast conceptions! God will deliver us from the rest." And Chesnel hung his head sadly, and did not dare to answer, "It cannot be God's will to sweep away France." Yet both of them were grand figures; the one, standing out against the torrent of facts like an ancient block of lichen-covered granite, still upright in the depths of an Alpine gorge; the other, watching the course of the flood to turn it to account. Then the good gray-headed notary would groan over the irreparable havoc which the superstitions were sure to work in the mind, the habits, and ideas of the Comte Victurnien d'Esgrignon.

Idolized by his father, idolized by his aunt, the young heir was a spoilt child in every sense of the word; but still a spoilt child who justified paternal and maternal illusions. Maternal, be it said, for Victurnien's aunt was truly a mother to him; and yet, however careful and tender she may be that never bore a child, there is a something lacking in her motherhood. A mother's second sight cannot be acquired. An aunt, bound to her nursling by ties of such a pure affection as united Mlle. Armande to Victurnien, may love as much as a mother might; may be as careful, as kind, as tender, as indulgent, but she lacks the mother's instinctive knowledge when and how to be severe; she has no sudden warnings, none of the uneasy presentiments of the mother's heart; for a mother, bound to her child from the beginnings of life by all the fibres of her being, still is conscious of the communication, still vibrates with the shock of every trouble, and thrills with every joy in the child's life as if it were her own. If Nature has made of woman, physically speaking, a neutral ground, it has not been forbidden to her, under certain conditions, to identify herself completely with her offspring. When she has not merely given life, but given of her whole life, you behold that wonderful, unexplained, and inexplicable thing—the love of a woman for one of her children above the others. The outcome of this story is one more proof of a proven truth —a mother's place cannot be filled. A mother foresees

danger long before a Mlle. Armande can admit the possibility of it, even if the mischief is done. The one prevents the evil, the other remedies it. And besides, in the maiden's motherhood there is an element of blind adoration, she cannot bring herself to scold a beautiful boy.

A practical knowledge of life, and the experience of business, had taught the old notary a habit of distrustful clear-sighted observation something akin to the mother's instinct. But Chesnel counted for so little in the house (especially since he had fallen into something like disgrace over that unlucky project of a marriage between a d'Esgrignon and a du Croisier), that he had made up his mind to adhere blindly in future to the family doctrines. He was a common soldier, faithful to his post, and ready to give his life; it was never likely that they would take his advice, even in the height of the storm; unless chance should bring him, like the King's bedesman in *The Antiquary,* to the edge of the sea, when the old baronet and his daughter were caught by the high tide.

Du Croisier caught a glimpse of his revenge in the anomalous education given to the lad. He hoped, to quote the expressive words of the author quoted above, "to drown the lamb in its mother's milk." *This* was the hope which had produced his taciturn resignation and brought that savage smile on his lips.

The young Comte Victurnien was taught to believe in his own supremacy as soon as an idea could enter his head. All the great nobles of the realm were his peers, his one superior was the King, and the rest of mankind were his inferiors, people with whom he had nothing in common, towards whom he had no duties. They were defeated and conquered enemies, whom he need not take into account for a moment; their opinions could not affect a noble, and they all owed him respect. Unluckily, with the rigorous logic of youth, which leads children and young people to proceed to extremes whether good or bad, Victurnien pushed these conclusions to their utmost consequences. His own external advantages,

moreover, confirmed him in his beliefs. He had been extraordinarily beautiful as a child; he became as accomplished a young man as any father could wish.

He was of average height, but well proportioned, slender, and almost delicate-looking, but muscular. He had the brilliant blue eyes of the d'Esgrignons, the finely-moulded aquiline nose, the perfect oval of the face, the auburn hair, the white skin, and the graceful gait of his family; he had their delicate extremities, their long taper fingers with the inward curve, and that peculiar distinction of shapeliness of the wrist and instep, that supple felicity of line, which is as sure a sign of race in men as in horses. Adroit and alert in all bodily exercises, and an excellent shot, he handled arms like a St. George, he was a paladin on horseback. In short, he gratified the pride which parents take in their children's appearance; a pride founded, for that matter, on a just idea of the enormous influence exercised by physical beauty. Personal beauty has this in common with noble birth: it cannot be acquired afterwards; it is everywhere recognized, and often is more valued than either brains or money; beauty has only to appear and triumph; nobody asks more of beauty than that it should simply exist.

Fate had endowed Victurnien, over and above the privileges of good looks and noble birth, with a high spirit, a wonderful aptitude of comprehension, and a good memory. His education, therefore, had been complete. He knew a good deal more than is usually known by young provincial nobles, who develop into highly-distinguished sportsmen, owners of land, and consumers of tobacco; and are apt to treat art, sciences, letters, poetry, or anything offensively above their intellects, cavalierly enough. Such gifts of nature and education surely would one day realize the Marquis d'Esgrignon's ambitions; he already saw his son a Marshal of France if Victurnien's tastes were for the army; an ambassador if diplomacy held any attractions for him; a cabinet minister if that career seemed good in his eyes; every place in the state belonged to Victurnien. And, most gratifying thought of all

for a father, the young Count would have made his way in the world by his own merits even if he had not been a d'Esgrignon.

All through his happy childhood and golden youth, Victurnien had never met with opposition to his wishes. He had been the king of the house; no one curbed the little prince's will; and naturally he grew up insolent and audacious, selfish as a prince, self-willed as the most high-spirited cardinal of the Middle Ages,—defects of character which any one might guess from his qualities, essentially those of the noble.

The Chevalier was a man of the good old times when the Gray Musketeers were the terror of the Paris theatres, when they horsewhipped the watch and drubbed servers of writs, and played a host of page's pranks, at which Majesty was wont to smile so long as they were amusing. This charming deceiver and hero of the *ruelles* had no small share in bringing about the disasters which afterwards befell. The amiable old gentleman, with nobody to understand him, was not a little pleased to find a budding Faublas, who looked the part to admiration, and put him in mind of his own young days. So, making no allowance for the difference of the times, he sowed the maxims of a *roué* of the Encyclopædic period broadcast in the boy's mind. He told wicked anecdotes of the reign of His Majesty Louis XV.; he glorified the manners and customs of the year 1750; he told of the orgies in *petites maisons,* the follies of courtesans, the capital tricks played on creditors, the manners, in short, which furnished forth Dancourt's comedies and Beaumarchais' epigrams. And unfortunately, the corruption lurking beneath the utmost polish tricked itself out in Voltairean wit. If the Chevalier went rather too far at times, he always added as a corrective that a man must always behave himself like a gentleman.

Of all this discourse, Victurnien comprehended just so much as flattered his passions. From the first he saw his old father laughing with the Chevalier. The two elderly men considered that the pride of a d'Esgrignon was a sufficient

safeguard against anything unbefitting; as for a dishonorable action, no one in the house imagined that a d'Esgrignon could be guilty of it. Honor, the great principle of Monarchy, was planted firm like a beacon in the hearts of the family; it lighted up the least action, it kindled the least thought of a d'Esgrignon. "A d'Esgrignon ought not to permit himself to do such and such a thing; he bears a name which pledges him to make the future worthy of the past"—a noble teaching which should have been sufficient in itself to keep alive the tradition of noblesse—had been, as it were, the burden of Victurnien's cradle song. He heard them from the old Marquis, from Mlle. Armande, from Chesnel, from the intimates of the house. And so it came to pass that good and evil met, and in equal forces, in the boy's soul.

At the age of eighteen, Victurnien went into society. He noticed some slight discrepancies between the outer world of the town and the inner world of the Hôtel d'Esgrignon, but he in no wise tried to seek the causes of them. And, indeed, the causes were to be found in Paris. He had yet to learn that the men who spoke their minds out so boldly in evening talk with his father, were extremely careful of what they said in the presence of the hostile persons with whom their interests compelled them to mingle. His own father had won the right of freedom of speech. Nobody dreamed of contradicting an old man of seventy, and besides, every one was willing to overlook fidelity to the old order of things in a man who had been violently despoiled.

Victurnien was deceived by appearances, and his behavior set up the backs of the townspeople. In his impetuous way he tried to carry matters with too high a hand over some difficulties in the way of sport, which ended in formidable lawsuits, hushed up by Chesnel for money paid down. Nobody dared to tell the Marquis of these things. You may judge of his astonishment if he had heard that his son had been prosecuted for shooting over his lands, his domains, his covers, under the reign of a son of St. Louis! People were too much afraid of the possible consequences to tell him about such trifles, Chesnel said.

The young Count indulged in other escapades in the town. These the Chevalier regarded as *"amourettes,"* but they cost Chesnel something considerable in portions for forsaken damsels seduced under imprudent promises of marriage: yet other cases there were which came under an article of the Code as to the abduction of minors; and but for Chesnel's timely intervention, the new law would have been allowed to take its brutal course, and it is hard to say where the Count might have ended. Victurnien grew the bolder for these victories over bourgeois justice. He was so accustomed to be pulled out of scrapes, that he never thought twice before any prank. Courts of law, in his opinion, were bugbears to frighten people who had no hold on him. Things which he would have blamed in common people were for him only pardonable amusements. His disposition to treat the new laws cavalierly while obeying the maxims of a Code for aristocrats, his behavior and character, were all pondered, analyzed, and tested by a few adroit persons in du Croisier's interests. These folk supported each other in the effort to make the people believe that Liberal slanders were revelations, and that the Ministerial policy at bottom meant a return to the old order of things.

What a bit of luck to find something by way of proof of their assertions! President du Ronceret, and the public prosecutor likewise, lent themselves admirably, so far as was compatible with their duty as magistrates, to the design of letting off the offender as easily as possible; indeed, they went deliberately out of their way to do this, well pleased to raise a Liberal clamor against their overlarge concessions. And so, while seeming to serve the interests of the d'Esgrignons, they stirred up ill feeling against them. The treacherous du Ronceret had it in his mind to pose as incorruptible at the right moment over some serious charge, with public opinion to back him up. The young Count's worst tendencies, moreover, were insidiously encouraged by two or three young men who followed in his train, paid court to him, won his favor, and flattered and obeyed him, with a view to confirming his belief in a noble's

supremacy; and all this at a time when a noble's one chance of preserving his power lay in using it with the utmost discretion for half a century to come.

Du Croisier hoped to reduce the d'Esgrignons to the last extremity of poverty; he hoped to see their castle demolished, and their lands sold piecemeal by auction, through the follies which this harebrained boy was pretty certain to commit. This was as far as he went; he did not think, with President du Ronceret, that Victurnien was likely to give justice another kind of hold upon him. Both men found an ally for their schemes of revenge in Victurnien's overweening vanity and love of pleasure. President du Ronceret's son, a lad of seventeen, was admirably fitted for the part of instigator. He was one of the Count's companions, a new kind of spy in du Croisier's pay; du Croisier taught him his lesson, set him to track down the noble and beautiful boy through his better qualities, and sardonically prompted him to encourage his victim in his worst faults. Fabien du Ronceret was a sophisticated youth, to whom such a mystification was attractive; he had precisely the keen brain and envious nature which finds in such a pursuit as this the absorbing amusement which a man of an ingenious turn lacks in the provinces.

In three years, between the ages of eighteen and one-and-twenty, Victurnien cost poor Chesnel nearly eighty thousand francs! And this without the knowledge of Mlle. Armande or the Marquis. More than half of the money had been spent in buying off lawsuits; the lad's extravagance had squandered the rest. Of the Marquis' income of ten thousand livres, five thousand were necessary for the housekeeping; two thousand more represented Mlle. Armande's allowance (parsimonious though she was) and the Marquis' expenses. The handsome young heir-presumptive, therefore, had not a hundred louis to spend. And what sort of figure can a man make on two thousand livres? Victurnien's tailor's bills alone absorbed his whole allowance. He had his linen, his clothes, gloves, and perfumery from Paris. He wanted a good English saddle-horse, a tilbury, and a second horse. M. du Croisier

had a tilbury and a thoroughbred. Was the bourgeoisie to cut out the noblesse? Then, the young Count must have a man in the d'Esgrignon livery. He prided himself on setting the fashion among young men in the town and the department; he entered that world of luxuries and fancies which suit youth and good looks and wit so well. Chesnel paid for it all, not without using, like ancient parliaments, the right of protest, albeit he spoke with angelic kindness.

"What a pity it is that so good a man should be so tiresome!" Victurnien would say to himself every time that the notary staunched some wound in his purse.

Chesnel had been left a widower, and childless; he had taken his old master's son to fill the void in his heart. It was a pleasure to him to watch the lad driving up the High Street, perched aloft on the box-seat of the tilbury, whip in hand, and a rose in his button-hole, handsome, well turned out, envied by every one.

Pressing need would bring Victurnien with uneasy eyes and coaxing manner, but steady voice, to the modest house in the Rue du Bercail; there had been losses at cards at the Troisvilles, or the Duc de Verneuil's, or the prefecture, or the receiver-general's, and the Count had come to his providence, the notary. He had only to show himself to carry the day.

"Well, what is it, M. le Comte? What has happened?" the old man would ask, with a tremor in his voice.

On great occasions Victurnien would sit down, assume a melancholy, pensive expression, and submit with little coquetries of voice and gesture to be questioned. Then when he had thoroughly roused the old man's fears (for Chesnel was beginning to fear how such a course of extravagance would end), he would own up to a peccadillo which a bill for a thousand francs would absolve. Chesnel possessed a private income of some twelve thousand livres, but the fund was not inexhaustible. The eighty thousand francs thus squandered represented his savings, accumulated for the day when the Marquis should send his son to Paris, or open negotiations for a wealthy marriage.

Chesnel was clear-sighted so long as Victurnien was not there before him. One by one he lost the illusions which the Marquis and his sister still fondly cherished. He saw that the young fellow could not be depended upon in the least, and wished to see him married to some modest, sensible girl of good birth, wondering within himself how a young man could mean so well and do so ill, for he made promises one day only to break them all on the next.

But there is never any good to be expected of young men who confess their sins and repent, and straightway fall into them again. A man of strong character only confesses his faults to himself, and punishes himself for them; as for the weak, they drop back into the old ruts when they find that the bank is too steep to climb. The springs of pride which lie in a great man's secret soul had been slackened in Victurnien. With such guardians as he had, such company as he kept, such a life as he had led, he had suddenly become an enervated voluptuary at that turning-point in his life when a man most stands in need of the harsh discipline of misfortune and poverty to bring out the strength that is in him, the pinch of adversity which formed a Prince Eugène, a Frederick II., a Napoleon. Chesnel saw that Victurnien possessed that uncontrollable appetite for enjoyments which should be the prerogative of men endowed with giant powers; the men who feel the need of counterbalancing their gigantic labors by pleasures which bring one-sided mortals to the pit.

At times the good man stood aghast; then, again, some profound sally, some sign of the lad's remarkable range of intellect, would reassure him. He would say, as the Marquis said at the rumor of some escapade, "Boys will be boys." Chesnel had spoken to the Chevalier, lamenting the young lord's propensity for getting into debt; but the Chevalier manipulated his pinch of snuff, and listened with a smile of amusement.

"My dear Chesnel, just explain to me what a national debt is," he answered. "If France has debts, egad! why should not Victurnien have debts? At this time and at all times

princes have debts, every gentleman has debts. Perhaps you would rather that Victurnien should bring you his savings?—Do you know what our great Richelieu (not the Cardinal, a pitiful fellow that put nobles to death, but the Maréchal), do you know what he did once when his grandson the Prince de Chinon, the last of the line, let him see that he had not spent his pocket-money at the University?"

"No, M. le Chevalier."

"Oh, well; he flung the purse out of the window to a sweeper in the courtyard, and said to his grandson, 'Then they do not teach you to be a prince here?' "

Chesnel bent his head and made no answer. But that night, as he lay awake, he thought that such doctrines as these were fatal in times when there was one law for everybody, and foresaw the first beginnings of the ruin of the d'Esgrignons.

But for these explanations which depict one side of provincial life in the time of the Empire and the Restoration, it would not be easy to understand the opening scene of this history, an incident which took place in the great salon one evening towards the end of October 1822. The card-tables were forsaken, the Collection of Antiquities—elderly nobles, elderly countesses, young marquises, and simple baronesses—had settled their losses and winnings. The master of the house was pacing up and down the room, while Mlle. Armande was putting out the candles on the card-tables. He was not taking exercise alone, the Chevalier was with him, and the two wrecks of the eighteenth century were talking of Victurnien. The Chevalier had undertaken to broach the subject with the Marquis.

"Yes, Marquis," he was saying, "your son is wasting his time and his youth; you ought to send him to court."

"I have always thought," said the Marquis, "that if my great age prevents me from going to court—where, between ourselves, I do not know what I should do among all these new people whom His Majesty receives, and all that is going on there—that if I could not go myself, I could at least send

my son to present our homage to His Majesty. The King surely would do something for the Count—give him a company, for instance, or a place in the Household, a chance, in short, for the boy to win his spurs. My uncle the Archbishop suffered a cruel martyrdom; I have fought for the cause without deserting the camp with those who thought it their duty to follow the Princes. I held that while the King was in France, his nobles should rally round him.—Ah! well, no one gives us a thought; a Henri IV. would have written before now to the d'Esgrignons, 'Come to me, my friends; we have won the day!'—After all, we are something better than the Troisvilles, yet here are two Troisvilles made peers of France; and another, I hear, represents the nobles in the Chamber." (He took the upper electoral colleges for assemblies of his own order.) "Really, they think no more of us than if we did not exist. I was waiting for the Princes to make their journey through this part of the world; but as the Princes do not come to us, we must go to the Princes."

"I am enchanted to learn that you think of introducing our dear Victurnien into society," the Chevalier put in adroitly. "He ought not to bury his talents in a hole like this town. The best fortune that he can look for here is to come across some Norman girl" (mimicking the accent), "country-bred, stupid, and rich. What could he make of her?—his wife? Oh! good Lord!"

"I sincerely hope that he will defer his marriage until he has obtained some great office or appointment under the Crown," returned the gray-haired Marquis. "Still, there are serious difficulties in the way."

And these were the only difficulties which the Marquis saw at the outset of his son's career.

"My son, the Comte d'Esgrignon, cannot make his appearance at court like a tatterdemalion," he continued after a pause, marked by a sigh; "he must be equipped. Alas! for these two hundred years we have had no retainers. Ah! Chevalier, this demolition from top to bottom always brings me back to the first hammer stroke delivered by M. de Mira-

beau. The one thing needful nowadays is money; that is all that the Revolution has done that I can see. The King does not ask you whether you are a descendant of the Valois or a conquerer of Gaul; he asks whether you pay a thousand francs in *tailles* which nobles never used to pay. So I cannot well send the Count to court without a matter of twenty thousand crowns——"

"Yes," assented the Chevalier, "with that trifling sum he could cut a brave figure."

"Well," said Mlle. Armande, "I have asked Chesnel to come to-night. Would you believe it, Chevalier, ever since the day when Chesnel proposed that I should marry that miserable du Croisier——"

"Ah! that was truly unworthy, mademoiselle!" cried the Chevalier.

"Unpardonable!" said the Marquis.

"Well, since then my brother has never brought himself to ask anything whatsoever of Chesnel," continued Mlle. Armande.

"Of your old household servant? Why, Marquis, you would do Chesnel honor—an honor which he would gratefully remember till his latest breath."

"No," said the Marquis, "the thing is beneath one's dignity, it seems to me."

"There is not much question of dignity; it is a matter of necessity," said the Chevalier, with the trace of a shrug.

"Never," said the Marquis, riposting with a gesture which decided the Chevalier to risk a great stroke to open his old friend's eyes.

"Very well," he said, "since you do not know it, I will tell you myself that Chesnel has let your son have something already, something like——"

"My son is incapable of accepting anything whatever from Chesnel," the Marquis broke in, drawing himself up as he spoke. "He might have come to *you* to ask you for twenty-five louis——"

"Something like a hundred thousand livres," said the Chevalier, finishing his sentence.

"The Comte d'Esgrignon owes a hundred thousand livres to a Chesnel!" cried the Marquis, with every sign of deep pain. "Oh! if he were not an only son, he should set out to-night for Mexico with a captain's commission. A man may be in debt to money-lenders, they charge a heavy interest, and you are quits; that is right enough; but *Chesnel!* a man to whom one is attached!——"

"Yes, our adorable Victurnien has run through a hundred thousand livres, dear Marquis," resumed the Chevalier, flicking a trace of snuff from his waistcoat; "it is not much, I know. I myself at his age—— But, after all, let us let old memories be, Marquis. The Count is living in the provinces; all things taken into consideration, it is not so much amiss. He will not go far; these irregularities are common in men who do great things afterwards——"

"And he is sleeping upstairs, without a word of this to his father," exclaimed the Marquis.

"Sleeping innocently as a child who has merely got five or six little bourgeoises into trouble, and now must have duchesses," returned the Chevalier.

"Why, he deserves a *lettre de cachet!*"

"'They' have done away with *lettres de cachet,*" said the Chevalier. "You know what a hubbub there was when they tried to institute a law for special cases. We could not keep the provost's courts, which M. *de* Bonaparte used to call *commissions militaires.*"

"Well, well; what are we to do if our boys are wild, or turn out scapegraces? Is there no locking them up in these days?" asked the Marquis.

The Chevalier looked at the heartbroken father and lacked courage to answer, "We shall be obliged to bring them up properly."

"And you have never said a word of this to me, Mlle. d'Esgrignon," added the Marquis, turning suddenly round upon Mlle. Armande. He never addressed her as Mlle. d'Esgrignon except when he was vexed; usually she was called "my sister."

"Why, monsieur, when a young man is full of life and

spirits, and leads an idle life in a town like this, what else can you expect?" asked Mlle. d'Esgrignon. She could not understand her brother's anger.

"Debts! eh! why, hang it all!" added the Chevalier. "He plays cards, he has little adventures, he shoots,—all these things are horribly expensive nowadays."

"Come," said the Marquis, "it is time to send him to the King. I will spend to-morrow morning in writing to our kinsmen."

"I have some acquaintance with the Ducs de Navarreins, de Lenoncourt, de Maufrigneuse, and de Chaulieu," said the Chevalier, though he knew, as he spoke, that he was pretty thoroughly forgotten.

"My dear Chevalier, there is no need of such formalities to present a d'Esgrignon at court," the Marquis broke in.—"A hundred thousand livres," he muttered; "this Chesnel makes very free. This is what comes of these accursed troubles. M. Chesnel protects my son. And now I must ask him. . . . No, sister, you must undertake this business. Chesnel shall secure himself for the whole amount by a mortgage on our lands. And just give this harebrained boy a good scolding; he will end by ruining himself if he goes on like this."

The Chevalier and Mlle. d'Esgrignon thought these words perfectly simple and natural, absurd as they would have sounded to any other listener. So far from seeing anything ridiculous in the speech, they were both very much touched by a look of something like anguish in the old noble's face. Some dark premonition seemed to weigh upon M. d'Esgrignon at that moment, some glimmering of an insight into the changed times. He went to the settee by the fireside and sat down, forgetting that Chesnel would be there before long; that Chesnel, of whom he could not bring himself to ask anything.

Just then the Marquis d'Esgrignon looked exactly as any imagination with a touch of romance could wish. He was almost bald, but a fringe of silken, white locks, curled at the tips, covered the back of his head. All the pride of race might

be seen in a noble forehead, such as you may admire in a Louis XV., a Beaumarchais, a Maréchal de Richelieu; it was not the square, broad brow of the portraits of the Maréchal de Saxe; nor yet the small hard circle of Voltaire, compact to overfulness; it was graciously rounded and finely moulded, the temples were ivory tinted and soft; and mettle and spirit, unquenched by age, flashed from the brilliant eyes. The Marquis had the Condé nose and the lovable Bourbon mouth, from which, as they used to say of the Comte d'Artois, only witty and urbane words proceed. His cheeks, sloping rather than foolishly rounded to the chin, were in keeping with his spare frame, thin legs, and plump hands. The strangulation cravat at his throat was of the kind which every marquis wears in all the portraits which adorn eighteenth century literature; it is common alike to Saint-Preux and to Lovelace, to the elegant Montesquieu's heroes and to Diderot's homespun characters (see the first editions of those writers' works).

The Marquis always wore a white, gold-embroidered, high waistcoat, with the red ribbon of a commander of the Order of St. Louis blazing upon his breast; and a blue coat with wide skirts, and fleurs-de-lys on the flaps, which were turned back—an odd costume which the King had adopted. But the Marquis could not bring himself to give up the Frenchman's knee-breeches nor yet the white silk stockings or the buckles at the knees. After six o'clock in the evening he appeared in full dress.

He read no newspapers but the *Quotidienne* and the *Gazette de France,* two journals accused by the Constitutional press of obscurantist views and uncounted "monarchical and religious" enormities; while the Marquis d'Esgrignon, on the other hand, found heresies and revolutionary doctrines in every issue. No matter to what extremes the organs of this or that opinion may go, they will never go quite far enough to please the purists on their own side; even as the portrayer of this magnificent personage is pretty certain to be accused of exaggeration, whereas he has done his best to soften down some of the cruder tones and dim the more startling tints of the original.

The Marquis d'Esgrignon rested his elbows on his knees and leant his head on his hands. During his meditations Mlle. Armande and the Chevalier looked at one another without uttering the thoughts in their minds. Was he pained by the discovery that his son's future must depend upon his sometime land steward? Was he doubtful of the reception awaiting the young Count? Did he regret that he had made no preparation for launching his heir into that brilliant world of court? Poverty had kept him in the depths of his province; how should he have appeared at court? He sighed heavily as he raised his head.

That sigh, in those days, came from the real aristocracy all over France; from the loyal provincial noblesse, consigned to neglect with most of those who had drawn sword and braved the storm for the cause.

"What have the Princes done for the du Guénics, or the Fontaines, or the Bauvans, who never submitted?" he muttered to himself. "They fling miserable pensions to the men who fought most bravely, and give them a royal lieutenancy in a fortress somewhere on the outskirts of the kingdom."

Evidently the Marquis doubted the reigning dynasty. Mlle. d'Esgrignon was trying to reassure her brother as to the prospects of the journey, when a step outside on the dry narrow footway gave them notice of Chesnel's coming. In another moment Chesnel appeared; Joséphin, the Count's gray-haired valet, admitted the notary without announcing him.

"Chesnel, my boy——" (Chesnel was a white-haired man of sixty-nine, with a square-jawed, venerable countenance; he wore knee-breeches, ample enough to fill several chapters of dissertation in the manner of Sterne, ribbed stockings, shoes with silver clasps, an ecclesiastical-looking coat and a high waistcoat of scholastic cut.

"Chesnel, my boy, it was very presumptuous of you to lend money to the Comte d'Esgrignon! If I repaid you at once and we never saw each other again, it would be no more than you deserve for giving wings to his vices."

There was a pause, a silence such as there falls at court when the King publicly reprimands a courtier. The old notary looked humble and contrite.

"I am anxious about that boy, Chesnel," continued the Marquis in a kindly tone; "I should like to send him to Paris to serve His Majesty. Make arrangements with my sister for his suitable appearance at court.—And we will settle accounts——"

The Marquis looked grave as he left the room with a friendly gesture of farewell to Chesnel.

"I thank M. le Marquis for all his goodness," returned the old man, who still remained standing.

Mlle. Armande rose to go to the door with her brother; she had rung the bell, old Joséphin was in readiness to light his master to his room.

"Take a seat, Chesnel," said the lady, as she returned, and with womanly tact she explained away and softened the Marquis' harshness. And yet beneath that harshness Chesnel saw a great affection. The Marquis' attachment for his old servant was something of the same order as a man's affection for his dog; he will fight any one who kicks the animal, the dog is like a part of his existence, a something which, if not exactly himself, represents him in that which is nearest and dearest—his sensibilities.

"It is quite time that M. le Comte should be sent away from the town, mademoiselle," he said sententiously.

"Yes," returned she. "Has he been indulging in some new escapade?"

"No, mademoiselle."

"Well, why do you blame him?"

"I am not blaming him, mademoiselle. No, I am not blaming him. I am very far from blaming him. I will even say that I shall never blame him, whatever he may do."

There was a pause. The Chevalier, nothing if not quick to take in a situation, began to yawn like a sleep-ridden mortal. Gracefully he made his excuses and went, with as little mind to sleep as to go and drown himself. The imp

Curiosity kept the Chevalier wide awake, and with airy fingers plucked away the cotton wool from his ears.

"Well, Chesnel, is it something new?" Mlle. Armande began anxiously.

"Yes, things that cannot be told to M. le Marquis; he would drop down in an apoplectic fit."

"Speak out," she said. With her beautiful head leant on the back of her low chair, and her arms extended listlessly by her side, she looked as if she were waiting passively for her deathblow.

"Mademoiselle, M. le Comte, with all his cleverness, is a plaything in the hands of mean creatures, petty natures on the lookout for a crushing revenge. They want to ruin us and bring us low! There is the President of the Tribunal, M. du Ronceret; he has, as you know, a very great notion of his descent——"

"His grandfather was an attorney," interposed Mlle. Armande.

"I know he was. And for that reason you have not received him; nor does he go to M. de Troisville's, nor to M. le Duc de Verneuil's, nor to the Marquis de Castéran's; but he is one of the pillars of du Croisier's salon. Your nephew may rub shoulders with young M. Fabien du Ronceret without condescending too far, for he must have companions of his own age. Well and good. That young fellow is at the bottom of all M. le Comte's follies; he and two or three of the rest of them belong to the other side, the side of M. le Chevalier's enemy, who does nothing but breathe threats of vengeance against you and all the nobles together. They all hope to ruin you through your nephew. The ringleader of the conspiracy is this sycophant of a du Croisier, the pretended Royalist. Du Croisier's wife, poor thing, knows nothing about it; you know her, I should have heard of it before this if she had ears to hear evil. For some time these wild young fellows were not in the secret, nor was anybody else; but the ringleaders let something drop in jest, and then the fools got to know about it, and after the Count's recent escapades they let fall some words while they were drunk. And those words were

carried to me by others who are sorry to see such a fine, handsome, noble, charming lad ruining himself with pleasure. So far people feel sorry for him; before many days are over they will—I am afraid to say what——"

"They will despise him; say it out, Chesnel!" Mlle. Armande cried piteously.

"Ah! How can you keep the best people in the town from finding out faults in their neighbors? They do not know what to do with themselves from morning to night. And so M. le Comte's losses at play are all reckoned up. Thirty thousand francs have taken flight during these two months, and everybody wonders where he gets the money. If they mention it when I am present, I just call them to order. Ah! but— 'Do you suppose' (I told them this morning), 'do you suppose that if the d'Esgrignon family have lost their manorial rights, that therefore they have been robbed of their hoard of treasure? The young Count has a right to do as he pleases; and so long as he does not owe you a half-penny, you have no right to say a word.' "

Mlle. Armande held out her hand, and the notary kissed it respectfully.

"Good Chesnel! . . . But, my friend, how shall we find the money for this journey? Victurnien must appear as befits his rank at court."

"Oh! I have borrowed money on Le Jard, mademoiselle."

"What? You had nothing left! Ah, heaven! what can we do to reward you?"

"You can take the hundred thousand francs which I hold at your disposal. You can understand that the loan was negotiated in confidence, so that it might not reflect on you; for it is known in the town that I am closely connected with the d'Esgrignon family."

Tears came into Mlle. Armande's eyes. Chesnel saw them, took a fold of the noble woman's dress in his hands, and kissed it.

"Never mind," he said, "a lad must sow his wild oats. In great salons in Paris his boyish ideas will take a new turn

And, really, though our old friends here are the worthiest folk in the world, and no one could have nobler hearts than they, they are not amusing. If M. le Comte wants amusement, he is obliged to look below his rank, and he will end by getting into low company."

Next day the old traveling coach saw the light, and was sent to be put in repair. In a solemn interview after breakfast, the hope of the house was duly informed of his father's intentions regarding him—he was to go to court and ask to serve His Majesty. He would have time during the journey to make up his mind about his career. The navy or the army, the privy council, an embassy, or the Royal Household,—all were open to a d'Esgrignon, a d'Esgrignon had only to choose. The King would certainly look favorably upon the d'Esgrignons, because they had asked nothing of him, and had sent the youngest representative of their house to receive the recognition of Majesty.

But young d'Esgrignon, with all his wild pranks, had guessed instinctively what society in Paris meant, and formed his own opinions of life. So when they talked of his leaving the country and the paternal roof, he listened with a grave countenance to his revered parent's lecture, and refrained from giving him a good deal of information in reply. As, for instance, that young men no longer went into the army or the navy as they used to do; that if a man had a mind to be a second lieutenant in a cavalry regiment without passing through a special training in the Écoles, he must first serve in the Pages; that sons of the greatest houses went exactly like commoners to Saint-Cyr and the École polytechnique, and took their chances of being beaten by base blood. If he had enlightened his relatives on these points, funds might not have been forthcoming for a stay in Paris; so he allowed his father and Aunt Armande to believe that he would be permitted a seat in the King's carriages, that he must support his dignity at court as the d'Esgrignon of the time, and rub shoulders with great lords of the realm.

It grieved the Marquis that he could send but one servant

with his son; but he gave him his own old valet Joséphin, a man who can be trusted to take care of his young master, and to watch faithfully over his interests. The poor father must do without Joséphin, and hope to replace him with a young lad.

"Remember that you are a Carol, my boy," he said; "remember that you come of an unalloyed descent, and that your scutcheon bears the motto *Cil est nostre;* with such arms you may hold your head high everywhere, and aspire to queens. Render grace to your father, as I to mine. We owe it to the honor of our ancestors, kept stainless until now, that we can look all men in the face, and need bend the knee to none save a mistress, the King, and God. This is the greatest of your privileges."

Chesnel, good man, was breakfasting with the family. He took no part in counsels based on heraldry, nor in the inditing of letters addressed to divers mighty personages of the day; but he had spent the night in writing to an old friend of his, one of the oldest established notaries of Paris. Without this letter it is not possible to understand Chesnel's real and assumed fatherhood. It almost recalls Dædalus' address to Icarus; for where, save in old mythology, can you look for comparisons worthy of this man of antique mould?

"My dear and estimable Sorbier,—I remember with no little pleasure that I made my first campaign in our honorable profession under your father, and that you had a liking for me, poor little clerk that I was. And now I appeal to old memories of the days when we worked in the same office, old pleasant memories for our hearts, to ask you to do me the one service that I have ever asked of you in the course of our long lives, crossed as they have been by political catastrophes, to which, perhaps, I owe it that I have the honor to be your colleague. And now I ask this service of you, my friend, and my white hairs will be brought with sorrow to the grave if you should refuse my entreaty. It is no question of myself or of mine, Sorbier, for I lost poor Mme. Chesnel, and I have no

child of my own. Something more to me than my own family (if I had had one) is involved—it is the Marquis d'Esgrignon's only son. I have had the honor to be the Marquis' land steward ever since I left the office to which his father sent me at his own expense, with the idea of providing for me. The house which nurtured me has passed through all the troubles of the Revolution. I have managed to save some of their property; but what is it, after all, in comparison with the wealth that they have lost? I cannot tell you, Sorbier, how deeply I am attached to the great house, which has been all but swallowed up under my eyes by the abyss of time. M. le Marquis was proscribed, and his lands confiscated, he was getting on in years, he had no child. Misfortunes upon misfortunes! Then M. le Marquis married, and his wife died when the young Count was born, and to-day this noble, dear, and precious child is all the life of the d'Esgrignon family; the fate of the house hangs upon him. He has got into debt here with amusing himself. What else should he do in the provinces with an allowance of a miserable hundred louis? Yes, my friend, a hundred louis, the great house has come to this.

"In this extremity his father thinks it necessary to send the Count to Paris to ask for the King's favor at court. Paris is a very dangerous place for a lad; if he is to keep steady there, he must have the grain of sense which makes notaries of us. Besides, I should be heartbroken to think of the poor boy living amid such hardships as we have known.—Do you remember the pleasure with which you shared my roll in the pit of the Théâtre-Français when we spent a day and a night there waiting to see *The Marriage of Figaro?* Oh, blind that we were!—We were happy and poor, but a noble cannot be happy in poverty. A noble in want—it is a thing against nature! Ah! Sorbier, when one has known the satisfaction of propping one of the grandest genealogical trees in the kingdom in its fall, it is so natural to interest oneself in it and to grow fond of it, and love it and water it and look to see it blossom. So you will not be surprised at so many precautions

on my part; you will not wonder when I beg the help of your lights, so that all may go well with our young man.

"The family has allowed a hundred thousand francs for the expenses of M. le Comte's journey. There is not a young man in Paris fit to compare with him, as you will see! You will take an interest in him as if he were your only son; and lastly, I am quite sure that Madame Sorbier will not hesitate to second you in the office of guardian. M. le Comte Victurnien's monthly allowance is fixed at two thousand francs, but give him ten thousand for his preliminary expenses. The family have provided in this way for a stay of two years, unless he takes a journey abroad, in which case we will see about making other arrangements. Join me in this work, my old friend, and keep the purse-strings fairly tight. Represent things to M. le Comte without reproving him; hold him in as far as you can, and do not let him anticipate his monthly allowance without sufficient reason, for he must not be driven to desperation if honor is involved.

"Keep yourself informed of his movements and doings, of the company which he keeps, and watch over his connections with women. M. le Chevalier says that an opera dancer often costs less than a court lady. Obtain information on that point and let me know. If you are too busy, perhaps Mme. Sorbier might know what becomes of the young man, and where he goes. The idea of playing the part of guardian angel to such a noble and charming boy might have attractions for her. God will remember her for accepting the sacred trust. Perhaps when you see M. le Comte Victurnien, her heart may tremble at the thought of all the dangers awaiting him in Paris; he is very young, and very handsome; clever, and at the same time disposed to trust others. If he forms a connection with some designing woman, Mme. Sorbier could counsel him better than you yourself could do. The old man-servant who is with him can tell you many things; sound Joséphin, I have told him to go to you in delicate matters.

"But why should I say more? We once were clerks together, and a pair of scamps; remember our escapades, and be

a little bit young again, my old friend, in your dealings with him. The sixty thousand francs will be remitted to you in the shape of a bill on the Treasury by a gentleman who is going to Paris," and so forth.

If the old couple to whom this epistle was addressed had followed out Chesnel's instructions, they would have been compelled to take three private detectives into their pay. And yet there was ample wisdom shown in Chesnel's choice of a depositary. A banker pays money to any one accredited to him so long as the money lasts; whereas, Victurnien was obliged, every time that he was in want of money, to make a personal visit to the notary, who was quite sure to use the right of remonstrance.

Victurnien heard that he was to be allowed two thousand francs every month, and thought that he betrayed his joy. He knew nothing of Paris. He fancied that he could keep up princely state on such a sum.

Next day he started on his journey. All the benedictions of the Collection of Antiquities went with him; he was kissed by the dowagers; good wishes were heaped on his head; his old father, his aunt, and Chesnel went with him out of the town, tears filling the eyes of all the three. The sudden departure supplied material for conversation for several evenings; and what was more, it stirred the rancorous minds of the salon du Croisier to the depths. The forage-contractor, the president, and others who had vowed to ruin the d'Esgrignons, saw their prey escaping out of their hands. They had based their schemes of revenge on a young man's follies, and now he was beyond their reach.

The tendency in human nature, which often gives a bigot a rake for a daughter, and makes a frivolous woman the mother of a narrow pietist; that rule of contraries, which, in all probability, is the "resultant" of the law of similarities, drew Victurnien to Paris by a desire to which he must sooner or later have yielded. Brought up as he had been in the old-fashioned provincial house, among the quiet, gentle faces that

smiled upon him, among sober servants attached to the family, and surroundings tinged with a general color of age, the boy had only seen friends worthy of respect. All of those about him, with the exception of the Chevalier, had example of venerable age, were elderly men and women, sedate of manner, decorous and sententious of speech. He had been petted by those women in the gray gowns and embroidered mittens described by Blondet. The antiquated splendors of his father's house were as little calculated as possible to suggest frivolous thoughts; and lastly, he had been educated by a sincerely religious abbé, possessed of all the charm of an old age, which has dwelt in two centuries, and brings to the Present its gifts of the dried roses of experience, the faded flowers of the old customs of its youth. Everything should have combined to fashion Victurnien to serious habits; his whole surroundings from childhood bade him continue the glory of a historic name, by taking his life as something noble and great; and yet Victurnien listened to dangerous promptings.

For him, his noble birth was a stepping-stone which raised him above other men. He felt that the idol of Noblesse, before which they burned incense at home, was hollow; he had come to be one of the commonest as well as one of the worst types from a social point of view—a consistent egoist. The aristocratic cult of the *Ego* simply taught him to follow his own fancies; he had been idolized by those who had the care of him in childhood, and adored by the companions who shared in his boyish escapades, and so he had formed a habit of looking and judging everything as it affected his own pleasure; he took it as a matter of course when good souls saved him from the consequences of his follies, a piece of mistaken kindness which could only lead to his ruin. Victurnien's early training, noble and pious though it was, had isolated him too much. He was out of the current of the life of his time, for the life of a provincial town is certainly not in the main current of the age; Victurnien's true destiny lifted him above it. He had learned to think of an action, not as it affected others, nor relatively, but absolutely from his own

point of view. Like despots, he made the law to suit the circumstance, a system which works in the lives of prodigal sons the same confusion which fancy brings into art.

Victurnien was quick-sighted, he saw clearly and without illusion, but he acted on impulse, and unwisely. An indefinable flaw of character, often seen in young men, but impossible to explain, led him to will one thing and do another. In spite of an active mind, which showed itself in unexpected ways, the senses had but to assert themselves, and the darkened brain seemed to exist no longer. He might have astonished wise men; he was capable of setting fools agape. His desires, like a sudden squall of bad weather, overclouded all the clear and lucid spaces of his brain in a moment; and then, after the dissipations which he could not resist, he sank, utterly exhausted in body, heart, and mind, into a collapsed condition bordering upon imbecility. Such a character will drag a man down into the mire if he is left to himself, or bring him to the highest heights of political power if he has some stern friend to keep him in hand. Neither Chesnel, nor the lad's father, nor Aunt Armande had fathomed the depths of a nature so nearly akin on many sides to the poetic temperament, yet smitten with a terrible weakness at its core.

By the time the old town lay several miles away, Victurnien felt not the slightest regret; he thought no more about the father, who had loved ten generations in his son, nor of the aunt, and her almost insane devotion. He was looking forward to Paris with vehement ill-starred longings, in thought he had lived in that fairyland, it had been the background of his brightest dreams. He imagined that he would be first in Paris, as he had been in the town and the department where his father's name was potent; but it was vanity, not pride, that filled his soul, and in his dreams his pleasures were to be magnified by all the greatness of Paris. The distance was soon crossed. The traveling coach, like his own thoughts, left the narrow horizon of the province for the vast world of the great city, without a break in the journey. He

stayed in the Rue de Richelieu, in a handsome hotel close to the boulevard, and hastened to take possession of Paris as a famished horse rushes into a meadow.

He was not long in finding out the difference between country and town, and was rather surprised than abashed by the change. His mental quickness soon discovered how small an entity he was in the midst of this all-comprehending Babylon; how insane it would be to attempt to stem the torrent of new ideas and new ways. A single incident was enough. He delivered his father's letter of introduction to the Duc de Lenoncourt, a noble who stood high in favor with the King. He saw the duke in his splendid mansion, among surroundings befitting his rank. Next day he met him again. This time the Peer of France was lounging on foot along the boulevard, just like any ordinary mortal, with an umbrella in his hand; he did not even wear the Blue Ribbon, without which no knight of the order could have appeared in public in other times. And, duke and peer and first gentleman of the bedchamber though he was, M. de Lenoncourt, spite of his high courtesy, could not repress a smile as he read his relative's letter; and that smile told Victurnien that the Collection of Antiquities and the Tuileries were separated by more than sixty leagues of road; the distance of several centuries lay between them.

The names of the families grouped about the throne are quite different in each successive reign, and the characters change with the names. It would seem that, in the sphere of court, the same thing happens over and over again in each generation; but each time there is a quite different set of personages. If history did not prove that this is so, it would seem incredible. The prominent men at the court of Louis XVIII., for instance, had scarcely any connection with the Rivières, Blacas, d'Avarays, Vitrolles, d'Autichamps, Pasquiers, Larochejaqueleins, Decazes, Dambrays, Lainés, de Villèles, La Bourdonnayes, and others who shone at the court of Louis XV. Compare the courtiers of Henri IV. with those of Louis XIV.; you will hardly find five great families of the former

time still in existence. The nephew of the great Richelieu was a very insignificant person at the court of Louis XIV.; while His Majesty's favorite, Villeroi, was the grandson of a secretary ennobled by Charles IX. And so it befell that the d'Esgrignons, all but princes under the Valois, and all-powerful in the time of Henri IV., had no fortune whatever at the court of Louis XVIII., which gave them not so much as a thought. At this day there are names as famous as those of royal houses—the Foix-Graillys, for instance, or the d'Hérouvilles—left to obscurity tantamount to extinction for want of money, the one power of the time.

All which things Victurnien beheld entirely from his own point of view; he felt the equality that he saw in Paris as a personal wrong. The monster Equality was swallowing down the last fragments of social distinction in the Restoration. Having made up his mind on this head, he immediately proceeded to try to win back his place with such dangerous, if blunted weapons, as the age left to the noblesse. It is an expensive matter to gain the attention of Paris. To this end, Victurnien adopted some of the ways then in vogue. He felt that it was a necessity to have horses and fine carriages, and all the accessories of modern luxury; he felt, in short, "that a man must keep abreast of the times," as de Marsay said—de Marsay, the first dandy that he came across in the first drawing-room to which he was introduced. For his misfortune, he fell in with a set of *roués,* with de Marsay, de Ronquerolles, Maxime de Trailles, des Lupeaulx, Rastignac, Ajuda-Pinto, Beaudenord, de la Roche-Hugon, de Manerville, and the Vandenesses, whom he met wherever he went, and a great many houses were open to a young man with his ancient name and reputation for wealth. He went to the Marquise d'Espard's, to the Duchesses de Grandlieu, de Carigliano, and de Chaulieu, to the Marquises d'Aiglemont and de Listomère, to Mme. de Sérizy's, to the Opéra, to the embassies and elsewhere. The Faubourg Saint-Germain has its provincial genealogies at its fingers' ends; a great name once recognized and adopted therein is a passport which opens many a door that will

scarcely turn on its hinges for unknown names or the lions of a lower rank.

Victurnien found his relatives both amiable and ready to welcome him so long as he did not appear as a suppliant; he saw at once that the surest way of obtaining nothing was to ask for something. At Paris, if the first impulse moves people to protect, second thoughts (which last a good deal longer) impel them to despise the protégé. Independence, vanity, and pride, all the young Count's better and worse feelings combined, led him, on the contrary, to assume an aggressive attitude. And therefore the Ducs de Verneuil, de Lenoncourt, de Chaulieu, de Navarreins, d'Hérouville, de Grandlieu, and de Maufrigneuse, the Princes de Cadignan and de Blamont-Chauvry, were delighted to present the charming survivor of the wreck of an ancient family at court.

Victurnien went to the Tuileries in a splendid carriage with his armorial bearings on the panels; but his presentation to His Majesty made it abundantly clear to him that the people occupied the royal mind so much that his nobility was like to be forgotten. The restored dynasty, moreover, was surrounded by triple ranks of eligible old men and gray-headed courtiers; the young noblesse was reduced to a cipher, and this Victurnien guessed at once. He saw that there was no suitable place for him at court, nor in the government, nor the army, nor, indeed, anywhere else. So he launched out into the world of pleasure. Introduced at the Élysée-Bourbon, at the Duchesse d'Angoulême's, at the Pavillon Marsan, he met on all sides with the surface civilities due to the heir of an old family, not so old but it could be called to mind by the sight of a living member. And, after all, it was not a small thing to be remembered. In the distinction with which Victurnien was honored lay the way to the peerage and a splendid marriage; he had taken the field with a false appearance of wealth, and his vanity would not allow him to declare his real position. Besides, he had been so much complimented on the figure that he made, he was so pleased with his first success, that, like many other young men, he felt ashamed to draw

back. He took a suite of rooms in the Rue du Bac, with stables and a complete equipment for the fashionable life to which he had committed himself. These preliminaries cost him fifty thousand francs, which money, moreover, the young gentleman managed to draw in spite of all Chesnel's wise precautions, thanks to a series of unforeseen events.

Chesnel's letter certainly reached his friend's office, but Maître Sorbier was dead; and Mme. Sorbier, a matter-of-fact person, seeing that it was a business letter, handed it on to her husband's successor. Maître Cardot, the new notary, informed the young Count that a draft on the Treasury made payable to the deceased would be useless; and by way of reply to the letter, which had cost the old provincial notary so much thought, Cardot despatched four lines intended not to reach Chesnel's heart, but to produce the money. Chesnel made the draft payable to Sorbier's young successor; and the latter, feeling but little inclination to adopt his correspondent's sentimentality, was delighted to put himself at the Count's orders, and gave Victurnien as much money as he wanted.

Now those who know what life in Paris means, know that fifty thousand francs will not go very far in furniture, horses, carriages, and elegance generally; but it must be borne in mind that Victurnien immediately contracted some twenty thousand francs' worth of debts besides, and his tradespeople at first were not at all anxious to be paid, for our young gentleman's fortune had been prodigiously increased, partly by rumor, partly by Joséphin, that Chesnel in livery.

Victurnien had not been in town a month before he was obliged to repair to his man of business for ten thousand francs; he had only been playing whist with the Ducs de Navarreins, de Chaulieu, and de Lenoncourt, and now and again at his club. He had begun by winning some thousands of francs, but pretty soon lost five or six thousand, which brought home to him the necessity of a purse for play. Victurnien had the spirit that gains goodwill everywhere, and puts a young man of a great family on a level with the very highest. He was not merely admitted at once into the

band of patrician youth, but was even envied by the rest. It was intoxicating to him to feel that he was envied, nor was he in this mood very likely to think of reform. Indeed, he had completely lost his head. He would not think of the means; he dipped into his money-bags as if they could be refilled indefinitely; he deliberately shut his eyes to the inevitable results of the system. In that dissipated set, in the continual whirl of gaiety, people take the actors in their brilliant costumes as they find them; no one inquires whether a man can afford to make the figure he does, there is nothing in worse taste than inquiries as to ways and means. A man ought to renew his wealth perpetually, and as Nature does—below the surface and out of sight. People talk if somebody comes to grief; they joke about a newcomer's fortune till their minds are set at rest, and at this they draw the line. Victurnien d'Esgrignon, with all the Faubourg Saint-Germain to back him, with all his protectors exaggerating the amount of his fortune (were it only to rid themselves of responsibility), and magnifying his possessions in the most refined and well-bred way, with a hint or a word; with all these advantages—to repeat—Victurnien was, in fact, an eligible Count. He was handsome, witty, sound in politics; his father still possessed the ancestral castle and the lands of the marquisate. Such a young fellow is sure of an admirable reception in houses where there are marriageable daughters, fair but portionless partners at dances, and young married women who find that time hangs heavy on their hands. So the world, smiling, beckoned him to the foremost benches in its booth; the seats reserved for marquises are still in the same place in Paris; and if the names are changed, the things are the same as ever.

In the most exclusive circle of society in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, Victurnien found the Chevalier's double in the person of the Vidame de Pamiers. The Vidame was a Chevalier de Valois raised to the tenth power, invested with all the prestige of wealth, enjoying all the advantages of high position. The dear Vidame was a repositary for everybody's

secrets, and the gazette of the Faubourg besides; nevertheless, he was discreet, and, like other gazettes, only said things that might safely be published. Again Victurnien listened to the Chevalier's esoteric doctrines. The Vidame told young d'Esgrignon, without mincing matters, to make conquests among women of quality, supplementing the advice with anecdotes from his own experience. The Vicomte de Pamiers, it seemed, had permitted himself much that it would serve no purpose to relate here; so remote was it all from our modern manners, in which soul and passion play so large a part, that nobody would believe it. But the excellent Vidame did more than this.

"Dine with me at a tavern to-morrow," said he, by way of conclusion. "We will digest our dinner at the Opéra, and afterwards I will take you to a house where several people have the greatest wish to meet you."

The Vidame gave a delightful little dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale;* three guests only were asked to meet Victurnien —de Marsay, Rastignac, and Blondet. Émile Blondet, the young Count's fellow-townsman, was a man of letters on the outskirts of society to which he had been introduced by a charming woman from the same province. This was one of the Vicomte de Troisville's daughters, now married to the Comte de Montcornet, one of those of Napoleon's generals who went over to the Bourbons. The Vidame held that a dinner-party of more than six persons was beneath contempt. In that case, according to him, there was an end alike of cookery and conversation, and a man could not sip his wine in a proper frame of mind.

"I have not yet told you, my dear boy, where I mean to take you to-night," he said, taking Victurnien's hands and tapping on them. "You are going to see Mlle. des Touches; all the pretty women with any pretensions to wit will be at her house *en petit comité.* Literature, art, poetry, any sort of genius, in short, is held in great esteem there. It is one of our old-world *bureaux d'esprit,* with a veneer of monarchical doctrine, the livery of this present age."

"It is sometimes as tiresome and tedious there as a pair of new boots, but there are women with whom you cannot meet anywhere else," said de Marsay.

"If all the poets who went there to rub up their muse were like our friend here," said Rastignac, tapping Blondet familiarly on the shoulder, "we should have some fun. But a plague of odes, and ballads, and driveling meditations, and novels with wide margins, pervades the sofas and the atmosphere."

"I don't dislike them," said de Marsay, "so long as they corrupt girls' minds, and don't spoil women."

"Gentlemen," smiled Blondet, "you are encroaching on my field of literature."

"You need not talk. You have robbed us of the most charming woman in the world, you lucky rogue; we may be allowed to steal your less brilliant ideas," cried Rastignac.

"Yes, he is a lucky rascal," said the Vidame, and he twitched Blondet's ear. "But perhaps Victurnien here will be luckier still this evening——"

"*Already!*" exclaimed de Marsay. "Why, he only came here a month ago; he has scarcely had time to shake the dust of his old manor house off his feet, to wipe off the brine in which his aunt kept him preserved; he has only just set up a decent horse, a tilbury in the latest style, a groom——"

"No, no, not a groom," interrupted Rastignac; "he has some sort of an agricultural laborer that he brought with him 'from his place.' Buisson, who understands a livery as well as most, declared that the man was physically incapable of wearing a jacket."

"I will tell you what, you ought to have modeled yourself on Beaudenord," the Vidame said seriously. "He has this advantage over all of you, my young friends, he has a genuine specimen of the English tiger——"

"Just see, gentlemen, what the noblesse have come to in France!" cried Victurnien. "For them the one important thing is to have a tiger, a thoroughbred, and baubles——"

"Bless me!" said Blondet. "'This gentleman's good sense at times appalls me.'—Well, yes, young moralist, you nobles have come to that. You have not even left to you that lustre of lavish expenditure for which the dear Vidame was famous fifty years ago. We revel on a second floor in the Rue Montorgueil. There are no more wars with the Cardinal, no Field of the Cloth of Gold. You, Comte d'Esgrignon, in short, are supping in the company of one Blondet, younger son of a miserable provincial magistrate, with whom you would not shake hands down yonder; and in ten years' time you may sit beside him among peers of the realm. Believe in yourself after that, if you can."

"Ah, well," said Rastignac, "we have passed from action to thought, from brute force to force of intellect, we are talking——"

"Let us not talk of our reverses," protested the Vidame; "I have made up my mind to die merrily. If our friend here has not a tiger as yet, he comes of a race of lions, and can dispense with one."

"He cannot do without a tiger," said Blondet; "he is too newly come to town."

"His elegance may be new as yet," returned de Marsay, "but we are adopting it. He is worthy of us, he understands his age, he has brains, he is nobly born and gently bred; we are going to like him, and serve him, and push him——"

"Whither?" inquired Blondet.

"Inquisitive soul!" said Rastignac.

"With whom will he take up to-night?" de Marsay asked.

"With a whole seraglio," said the Vidame.

"Plague take it! What can we have done that the dear Vidame is punishing us by keeping his word to the infanta? I should be pitiable indeed if I did not know her——"

"And I was once a coxcomb even as he," said the Vidame, indicating de Marsay.

The conversation continued pitched in the same key, charmingly scandalous, and agreeably corrupt. The dinner went off very pleasantly. Rastignac and de Marsay went to the

Opéra with the Vidame and Victurnien, with a view to following them afterwards to Mlle. des Touches' salon. And thither, accordingly, this pair of rakes betook themselves, calculating that by that time the tragedy would have been read; for of all things to be taken between eleven and twelve o'clock at night, a tragedy in their opinion was the most unwholesome. They went to keep a watch on Victurnien and to embarrass him, a piece of schoolboy's mischief embittered by a jealous dandy's spite. But Victurnien was gifted with that page's effrontery which is a great help to ease of manner; and Rastignac, watching him as he made his entrance, was surprised to see how quickly he caught the tone of the moment.

"That young d'Esgrignon will go far, will he not?" he said, addressing his companion.

"That is as may be," returned de Marsay, "but he is in a fair way."

The Vidame introduced his young friend to one of the most amiable and frivolous duchesses of the day, a lady whose adventures caused an explosion five years later. Just then, however, she was in the full blaze of her glory; she had been suspected, it is true, of equivocal conduct; but suspicion, while it is still suspicion and not proof, marks a woman out with the kind of distinction which slander gives to a man. Nonentities are never slandered; they chafe because they are left in peace. This woman was, in fact, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, a daughter of the d'Uxelles; her father-in-law was still alive; she was not to be the Princesse de Cadignan for some years to come. A friend of the Duchesse de Langeais and the Vicomtesse de Beauséant, two glories departed, she was likewise intimate with the Marquise d'Espard, with whom she disputed her fragile sovereignty as queen of fashion. Great relations lent her countenance for a long while, but the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse was one of those women who, in some way, nobody knows how, or why, or where, will spend the rents of all the lands of earth, and of

the moon likewise, if they were not out of reach. The general outline of her character was scarcely known as yet; de Marsay, and de Marsay only, really had read her. That redoubtable dandy now watched the Vidame de Pamiers' introduction of his young friend to that lovely woman, and bent over to say in Rastignac's ear:

"My dear fellow, he will go up *whizz!* like a rocket, and come down like a stick," an atrociously vulgar saying which was remarkably fulfilled.

The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse had lost her heart to Victurnien after first giving her mind to a serious study of him. Any lover who should have caught the glance by which she expressed her gratitude to the Vidame might well have been jealous of such friendship. Women are like horses let loose on a steppe when they feel, as the Duchess felt with the Vidame de Pamiers, that the ground is safe; at such moments they are themselves; perhaps it pleases them to give, as it were, samples of their tenderness in intimacy in this way. It was a guarded glance, nothing was lost between eye and eye; there was no possibility of reflection in any mirror. Nobody intercepted it.

"See how she has prepared herself," Rastignac said, turning to de Marsay. "What a virginal toilette; what swan's grace in that snow-white throat of hers! How white her gown is, and she is wearing a sash like a little girl; she looks round like a madonna inviolate. Who would think that you had passed that way?"

"The very reason why she looks as she does," returned de Marsay, with a triumphant air.

The two young men exchanged a smile. Mme. de Maufrigneuse saw the smile and guessed at their conversation, and gave the pair a broadside of her eyes, an art acquired by Frenchwomen since the Peace, when Englishwomen imported it into this country, together with the shape of their silver plate, their horses and harness, and the piles of insular ice which impart a refreshing coolness to the atmosphere of any room in which a certain number of British females are

gathered together. The young men grew serious as a couple of clerks at the end of a homily from headquarters before the receipt of an expected bonus.

The Duchess when she lost her heart to Victurnien had made up her mind to play the part of romantic Innocence, a rôle much understudied subsequently by other women, for the misfortune of modern youth. Her Grace of Maufrigneuse had just come out as an angel at a moment's notice, precisely as she meant to turn to literature and science somewhere about her fortieth year instead of taking to devotion. She made a point of being like nobody else. Her parts, her dresses, her caps, opinions, toilettes, and manner of acting were all entirely new and original. Soon after her marriage, when she was scarcely more than a girl, she had played the part of a knowing and almost depraved woman; she ventured on risky repartees with shallow people, and betrayed her ignorance to those who knew better. As the date of that marriage made it impossible to abstract one little year from her age without the knowledge of Time, and as Her Grace had reached her twenty-sixth year, she had taken it into her head to be immaculate. She scarcely seemed to belong to earth; she shook out her wide sleeves as if they had been wings. Her eyes fled to heaven at too warm a glance, or word, or thought.

There is a madonna painted by Piola, the great Genoese painter, who bade fair to bring out a second edition of Raphael till his career was cut short by jealousy and murder; his madonna, however, you may dimly discern through a pane of glass in a little street in Genoa.

A more chaste-eyed madonna than Piola's does not exist; but compared with Mme. de Maufrigneuse, that heavenly creature was a Messalina. Women wondered among themselves how such a giddy young thing had been transformed by a change of dress into the fair veiled seraph who seemed (to use an expression now in vogue) to have a soul as white as new fallen snow on the highest Alpine crests. How had she solved in such short space the Jesuitical problem how to

display a bosom whiter than her soul by hiding it in gauze? How could she look so ethereal while her eyes drooped so murderously? Those almost wanton glances seemed to give promise of untold languorous delight, while by an ascetic's sigh of aspiration after a better life the mouth appeared to add that none of those promises would be fulfilled. Ingenuous youths (for there were a few to be found in the Guards of that day) privately wondered whether, in the most intimate moments, it were possible to speak familiarly to this White Lady, this starry vapor slidden down from the Milky Way. This system, which answered completely for some years at a stretch, was turned to good account by women of fashion, whose breasts were lined with a stout philosophy, for they could cloak no inconsiderable exactions with these little airs from the sacristy. Not one of the celestial creatures but was quite well aware of the possibilities of less ethereal love which lay in the longing of every well-conditioned male to recall such beings to earth. It was a fashion which permitted them to abide in a semi-religious, semi-Ossianic empyrean; they could, and did, ignore all the practical details of daily life, a short and easy method of disposing of many questions. De Marsay, foreseeing the future developments of the system, added a last word, for he saw that Rastignac was jealous of Victurnien.

"My boy," said he, "stay as you are. Our Nucingen will make your fortune, whereas the Duchess would ruin you. She is too expensive."

Rastignac allowed de Marsay to go without asking further questions. He knew Paris. He knew that the most refined and noble and disinterested of women—a woman who cannot be induced to accept anything but a bouquet—can be as dangerous an acquaintance for a young man as any opera girl of former days. As a matter of fact, the opera girl is an almost mythical being. As things are now at the theatres, dancers and actresses are about as amusing as a declaration of the rights of woman, they are puppets that go abroad in the morning in the character of respected and respectable mothers

of families, and act men's parts in tight-fitting garments at night.

Worthy M. Chesnel, in his country notary's office, was right; he had foreseen one of the reefs on which the Count might make shipwreck. Victurnien was dazzled by the poetic aureole which Mme. de Maufrigneuse chose to assume; he was chained and padlocked from the first hour in her company, bound captive by that girlish sash, and caught by the curls twined round fairy fingers. Far corrupted the boy was already, but he really believed in that farrago of maidenliness and muslin, in sweet looks as much studied as an Act of Parliament. And if the one man, who is in duty bound to believe in feminine fibs, is deceived by them, is not that enough?

For a pair of lovers, the rest of their species are about as much alive as figures on the tapestry. The Duchess, flattery apart, was avowedly and admittedly one of the ten handsomest women in society. "The loveliest woman in Paris" is, as you know, as often met with in the world of love-making as "the finest book that has appeared in this generation," in the world of letters.

The converse which Victurnien held with the Duchess can be kept up at his age without too great a strain. He was young enough and ignorant enough of life in Paris to feel no necessity to be upon his guard, no need to keep a watch over his lightest words and glances. The religious sentimentalism, which finds a broadly humorous commentary in the after-thoughts of either speaker, puts the old-world French chat of men and women, with its pleasant familiarity, its lively ease, quite out of the question; they make love in a mist nowadays.

Victurnien was just sufficient of an unsophisticated provincial to remain suspended in a highly appropriate and unfeigned rapture which pleased the Duchess; for women are no more to be deceived by the comedies which men play than by their own. Mme. de Maufrigneuse calculated, not without dismay, that the young Count's infatuation was likely to hold

good for six whole months of disinterested love. She looked so lovely in this dove's mood, quenching the light in her eyes by the golden fringe of their lashes, that when the Marquise d'Espard bade her friend good-night, she whispered, "Good! very good, dear!" And with those farewell words, the fair Marquise left her rival to make the tour of the modern *Pays du Tendre;* which, by the way, is not so absurd a conception as some appear to think. New maps of the country are engraved for each generation; and if the names of the routes are different, they still lead to the same capital city.

In the course of an hour's *tête-à-tête,* on a corner sofa, under the eyes of the world, the Duchess brought young d'Esgrignon as far as Scipio's Generosity, the Devotion of Amadis, and Chivalrous Self-abnegation (for the Middle Ages were just coming into fashion, with their daggers, machicolations, hauberks, chain-mail, peaked shoes, and romantic painted card-board properties). She had an admirable turn, moreover, for leaving things unsaid, for leaving ideas in a discreet, seeming careless way, to work their way down, one by one, into Victurnien's heart, like needles into a cushion. She possessed a marvelous skill in reticence; she was charming in hypocrisy, lavish of subtle promises, which revived hope and then melted away like ice in the sun if you looked at them closely, and most treacherous in the desire which she felt and inspired. At the close of this charming encounter she produced the running noose of an invitation to call, and flung it over him with a dainty demureness which the printed page can never set forth.

"You will forget me," she said. "You will find so many women eager to pay court to you instead of enlightening you. . . . But you will come back to me undeceived. Are you coming to me first? . . . No. As you will.—For my own part, I tell you frankly that your visits will be a great pleasure to me. People of soul are so rare, and I think that you are one of them.—Come, good-bye; people will begin to talk about us if we talk together any longer."

She made good her words and took flight. Victurnien

went soon afterwards, but not before others had guessed his ecstatic condition; his face wore the expression peculiar to happy men, something between an Inquisitor's calm discretion and the self-contained beatitude of a devotee, fresh from the confessional and absolution.

"Mme. de Maufrigneuse went pretty briskly to the point this evening," said the Duchesse de Grandlieu, when only half-a-dozen persons were left in Mlle. des Touches' little drawing-room—to wit, des Lupeaulx, a Master of Requests, who at that time stood very well at court, Vandenesse, the Vicomtesse de Grandlieu, Canalis, and Mme. de Sérizy.

"D'Esgrignon and Maufrigneuse are two names that are sure to cling together," said Mme. de Sérizy, who aspired to epigram.

"For some days past she has been out at grass on Platonism," said des Lupeaulx.

"She will ruin that poor innocent," added Charles de Vandenesse.

"What do you mean?" asked Mlle. des Touches.

"Oh, morally and financially, beyond all doubt," said the Vicomtesse, rising.

The cruel words were cruelly true for young d'Esgrignon.

Next morning he wrote to his aunt describing his introduction into the high world of the Faubourg Saint-Germain in bright colors flung by the prism of love, explaining the reception which met him everywhere in a way which gratified his father's family pride. The Marquis would have the whole long letter read to him twice; he rubbed his hands when he heard of the Vidame de Pamiers' dinner—the Vidame was an old acquaintance—and of the subsequent introduction to the Duchess; but at Blondet's name he lost himself in conjectures. What could the younger son of a judge, a public prosecutor during the Revolution, have been doing there?

There was joy that evening among the Collection of Antiquities. They talked over the young Count's success. So discreet were they with regard to Mme. de Maufrigneuse, that the one man who heard the secret was the Chevalier. There

was no financial postscript at the end of the letter, no unpleasant concluding reference to the sinews of war, which every young man makes in such a case. Mlle. Armande showed it to Chesnel. Chesnel was pleased and raised not a single objection. It was clear, as the Marquis and the Chevalier agreed, that a young man in favor with the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse would shortly be a hero at court, where in the old days women were all-powerful. The Count had not made a bad choice. The dowagers told over all the gallant adventures of the Maufrigneuses from Louis XIII. to Louis XVI.—they spared to inquire into preceding reigns—and when all was done they were enchanted.—Mme. de Maufrigneuse was much praised for interesting herself in Victurnien. Any writer of plays in search of a piece of pure comedy would have found it well worth his while to listen to the Antiquities in conclave.

Victurnien received charming letters from his father and aunt, and also from the Chevalier. That gentleman recalled himself to the Vidame's memory. He had been at Spa with M. de Pamiers in 1778, after a certain journey made by a celebrated Hungarian princess. And Chesnel also wrote. The fond flattery to which the unhappy boy was only too well accustomed shone out of every page; and Mlle. Armande seemed to share half of Mme. de Maufrigneuse's happiness.

Thus happy in the approval of his family, the young Count made a spirited beginning in the perilous and costly ways of dandyism. He had five horses—he was moderate—de Marsay had fourteen! He returned the Vidame's hospitality, even including Blondet in the invitation, as well as de Marsay and Rastignac. The dinner cost five hundred francs, and the noble provincial was fêted on the same scale. Victurnien played a good deal, and, for his misfortune, at the fashionable game of whist.

He laid out his days in busy idleness. Every day between twelve and three o'clock he was with the Duchess; after-

wards he went to meet her in the Bois de Boulogne and ride beside her carriage. Sometimes the charming couple rode together, but this was early in fine summer mornings. Society, balls, the theatre, and gaiety filled the Count's evening hours. Everywhere Victurnien made a brilliant figure; everywhere he flung the pearls of his wit broadcast. He gave his opinion on men, affairs, and events in profound sayings; he would have put you in mind of a fruit-tree putting forth all its strength in blossom. He was leading an enervating life, wasteful of money, and even yet more wasteful, it may be, of a man's soul; in that life the fairest talents are buried out of sight, the most incorruptible honesty perishes, the best-tempered springs of will are slackened.

The Duchess, so white and fragile and angel-like, felt attracted to the dissipations of bachelor life; she enjoyed first nights, she liked anything amusing, anything improvised. Bohemian restaurants lay outside her experience; so d'Esgrignon got up a charming little party at the *Rocher de Cancale* for her benefit, asked all the amiable scamps whom she cultivated and sermonized, and there was a vast amount of merriment, wit, and gaiety, and a corresponding bill to pay. That supper party led to others. And through it all Victurnien worshiped her as an angel. Mme. de Maufrigneuse for him was still an angel, untouched by any taint of earth; an angel at the Variétés, where she sat out the half-obscene, vulgar farces, which made her laugh; an angel through the cross-fire of highly-flavored jests and scandalous anecdotes, which enlivened a stolen frolic; a languishing angel in the latticed box at the Vaudeville; an angel while she criticised the postures of opera dancers with the experience of an elderly habitué of *le coin de la reine;* an angel at the Porte Saint-Martin, at the little boulevard theatres, at the masked balls, which she enjoyed like any schoolboy. She was an angel who asked him for the love that lives by self-abnegation and heroism and self-sacrifice; an angel who would have her lover live like an English lord, with an income of a million francs. D'Esgrignon once exchanged a horse because the animal's

coat did not satisfy her notions. At play she was an angel, and certainly no bourgeoise that ever lived could have bidden d'Esgrignon "Stake for me!" in such an angelic way. She was so divinely reckless in her folly, that a man might well have sold his soul to the devil lest this angel should lose her taste for earthly pleasures.

The first winter went by. The Count had drawn on M. Cardot for the trifling sum of thirty thousand francs over and above Chesnel's remittance. As Cardot very carefully refrained from using his right of remonstrance, Victurnien now learned for the first time that he had overdrawn his account. He was the more offended by an extremely polite refusal to make any further advance, since it so happened that he had just lost six thousand francs at play at the club, and he could not very well show himself there until they were paid.

After growing indignant with Maître Cardot, who had trusted him with thirty thousand francs (Cardot had written to Chesnel, but to the fair Duchess' favorite he made the most of his so-called confidence in him), after all this, d'Esgrignon was obliged to ask the lawyer to tell him how to set about raising the money, since debts of honor were in question.

"Draw bills on your father's banker, and take them to his correspondent; he, no doubt, will discount them for you. Then write to your family, and tell them to remit the amount to the banker."

An inner voice seemed to suggest du Croisier's name in this predicament. He had seen du Croisier on his knees to the aristocracy, and of the man's real disposition he was entirely ignorant. So to du Croisier he wrote a very offhand letter, informing him that he had drawn a bill of exchange on him for ten thousand francs, adding that the amount would be repaid on receipt of the letter either by M. Chesnel or by Mlle. Armande d'Esgrignon. Then he indited two touching epistles—one to Chesnel, another to his aunt. In the matter of going headlong to ruin, a young man often

shows singular ingenuity and ability, and fortune favors him. In the morning Victurnien happened on the name of the Paris bankers in correspondence with du Croisier, and de Marsay furnished him with the Kellers' address. De Marsay knew everything in Paris. The Kellers took the bill and gave him the sum without a word, after deducting the discount. The balance of the account was in du Croisier's favor.

But the gaming debt was as nothing in comparison with the state of things at home. Invoices showered in upon Victurnien.

"I say! Do you trouble yourself about that sort of thing?" Rastignac said, laughing. "Are you putting them in order, my dear boy? I did not think you were so business-like."

"My dear fellow, it is quite time I thought about it; there are twenty odd thousand francs there."

De Marsay, coming in to look up d'Esgrignon for a steeplechase, produced a dainty little pocket-book, took out twenty thousand francs, and handed them to him.

"It is the best way of keeping the money safe," said he; "I am twice enchanted to have won it yesterday from my honored father, Milord Dudley."

Such French grace completely fascinated d'Esgrignon; he took it for friendship; and as to the money, punctually forgot to pay his debts with it, and spent it on his pleasures. The fact was that de Marsay was looking on with an unspeakable pleasure while young d'Esgrignon "got out of his depth," in dandy's idiom; it pleased de Marsay in all sorts of fondling ways to lay an arm on the lad's shoulder; by and by he should feel its weight, and disappear the sooner. For de Marsay was jealous; the Duchess flaunted her love affair; she was not at home to other visitors when d'Esgrignon was with her. And besides, de Marsay was one of those savage humorists who delight in mischief, as Turkish women in the bath. So, when he had carried off the prize, and bets were settled at the tavern where they breakfasted, and a bottle or two of good wine had appeared, de Marsay turned to d'Esgrignon with a laugh:

"Those bills that you are worrying over are not yours, I am sure."

"Eh! if they weren't, why should he worry himself?" asked Rastignac.

"And whose should they be?" d'Esgrignon inquired.

"Then you do not know the Duchess' position?" queried de Marsay, as he sprang into the saddle.

"No," said d'Esgrignon, his curiosity aroused.

"Well, dear fellow, it is like this," returned de Marsay—"thirty thousand francs to Victorine, eighteen thousand francs to Houbigaut, lesser amounts to Herbault, Nattier, Nourtier, and those Latour people,—altogether a hundred thousand francs."

"An angel!" cried d'Esgrignon, with eyes uplifted to heaven.

"This is the bill for her wings," Rastignac cried facetiously.

"She owes all that, my dear boy," continued de Marsay, "precisely because she is an angel. But we have all seen angels in this position," he added, glancing at Rastignac; "there is this about women that is sublime: they understand nothing of money; they do not meddle with it, it is no affair of theirs; they are invited guests at the 'banquet of life,' as some poet or other said that came to an end in the workhouse."

"How do you know this when I do not?" d'Esgrignon artlessly returned.

"You are sure to be the last to know it, just as she is sure to be the last to hear that you are in debt."

"I thought she had a hundred thousand livres a year," said d'Esgrignon.

"Her husband," replied de Marsay, "lives apart from her. He stays with his regiment and practises economy, for he has one or two little debts of his own as well, has our dear Duke. Where do you come from? Just learn to do as we do and keep our friends' accounts for them. Mlle. Diane (I fell in love with her for the name's sake), Mlle. Diane d'Uxelles

brought her husband sixty thousand livres of income; for the last eight years she has lived as if she had two hundred thousand. It is perfectly plain that at this moment her lands are mortgaged up to their full value; some fine morning the crash must come, and the angel will be put to flight by—must it be said?—by sheriff's officers that have the effrontery to lay hands on an angel just as they might take hold of one of us."

"Poor angel!"

"Lord! it costs a great deal to dwell in a Parisian heaven; you must whiten your wings and your complexion every morning," said Rastignac.

Now as the thought of confessing his debts to his beloved Diane had passed through d'Esgrignon's mind, something like a shudder ran through him when he remembered that he still owed sixty thousand francs, to say nothing of bills to come for another ten thousand. He went back melancholy enough. His friends remarked his ill-disguised preoccupation, and spoke of it among themselves at dinner.

"Young d'Esgrignon is getting out of his depth. He is not up to Paris. He will blow his brains out. A little fool!" and so on and so on.

D'Esgrignon, however, promptly took comfort. His servant brought him two letters. The first was from Chesnel. A letter from Chesnel smacked of the stale grumbling faithfulness of honesty and its consecrated formulas. With all respect he put it aside till the evening. But the second letter he read with unspeakable pleasure. In Ciceronian phrases, du Croisier groveled before him, like a Sganarelle before a Géronte, begging the young Count in future to spare him the affront of first depositing the amount of the bills which he should condescend to draw. The concluding phrase seemed meant to convey the idea that here was an open cashbox full of coin at the service of the noble d'Esgrignon family. So strong was the impression that Victurnien, like Sganarelle or Mascarille in the play, like everybody else who feels a twinge of conscience at his finger-tips, made an involuntary gesture.

Now that he was sure of unlimited credit with the Kellers, he opened Chesnel's letter gaily. He had expected four full pages, full of expostulation to the brim; he glanced down the sheet for the familiar words "prudence," "honor," "determination to do right," and the like, and saw something else instead which made his head swim.

"MONSIEUR LE COMTE,—Of all my fortune I have now but two hundred thousand francs left. I beg of you not to exceed that amount, if you should do one of the most devoted servants of your family the honor of taking it. I present my respects to you. CHESNEL."

"He is one of Plutarch's men," Victurnien said to himself, as he tossed the letter on the table. He felt chagrined; such magnanimity made him feel very small.

"There! one must reform," he thought; and instead of going to a restaurant and spending fifty or sixty francs over his dinner, he retrenched by dining with the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, and told her about the letter.

"I should like to see that man," she said, letting her eyes shine like two fixed stars.

"What would you do?"

"Why, he should manage my affairs for me."

Diane de Maufrigneuse was divinely dressed; she meant her toilet to do honor to Victurnien. The levity with which she treated his affairs or, more properly speaking, his debts fascinated him.

The charming pair went to the Italiens. Never had that beautiful and enchanting woman looked more seraphic, more ethereal. Nobody in the house could have believed that she had debts which reached the sum total mentioned by de Marsay that very morning. No single one of the cares of earth had touched that sublime forehead of hers, full of woman's pride of the highest kind. In her, a pensive air seemed to be some gleam of an earthly love, nobly extinguished. The men for the most part were wagering that Victurnien, with his

handsome figure, laid her under contribution; while the women, sure of their rival's subterfuge, admired her as Michael Angelo admired Raphael, *in petto.* Victurnien loved Diane, according to one of these ladies, for the sake of her hair—she had the most beautiful fair hair in France; another maintained that Diane's pallor was her principal merit, for she was not really well shaped, her dress made the most of her figure; yet others thought that Victurnien loved her for her foot, her one good point, for she had a flat figure. But (and this brings the present-day manner of Paris before you in an astonishing manner) whereas all the men said that the Duchess was subsidizing Victurnien's splendor, the women, on the other hand, gave people to understand that it was Victurnien who paid for the angel's wings, as Rastignac said.

As they drove back again, Victurnien had it on the tip of his tongue a score of times to open this chapter, for the Duchess' debts weighed more heavily upon his mind than his own; and a score of times his purpose died away before the attitude of the divine creature beside him. He could see her by the light of the carriage lamps; she was bewitching in the love-languor which always seemed to be extorted by the violence of passion from her madonna's purity. The Duchess did not fall into the mistake of talking of her virtue, of her angel's estate, as provincial women, her imitators, do. She was far too clever. She made him, for whom she made such great sacrifices, think these things for himself. At the end of six months she could make him feel that a harmless kiss on her hand was a deadly sin; she contrived that every grace should be extorted from her, and this with such consummate art, that it was impossible not to feel that she was more an angel than ever when she yielded.

None but Parisian women are clever enough always to give a new charm to the moon, to romanticize the stars, to roll in the same sack of charcoal and emerge each time whiter than ever. This is the highest refinement of intellectual and Parisian civilization. Women beyond the Rhine or the English Channel believe nonsense of this sort when they utter

it; while your Parisienne makes her lover believe that she is an angel, the better to add to his bliss by flattering his vanity on both sides—temporal and spiritual. Certain persons, detractors of the Duchess, maintain that she was the first dupe of her own white magic. A wicked slander. The Duchess believed in nothing but herself.

By the end of the year 1823 the Kellers had supplied Victurnien with two hundred thousand francs, and neither Chesnel nor Mlle. Armande knew anything about it. He had had, besides, two thousand crowns from Chesnel at one time and another, the better to hide the sources on which he was drawing. He wrote lying letters to his poor father and aunt, who lived on, happy and deceived, like most happy people under the sun. The insidious current of life in Paris was bringing a dreadful catastrophe upon the great and noble house; and only one person was in the secret of it. This was du Croisier. He rubbed his hands gleefully as he went past in the dark and looked in at the Antiquities. He had good hope of attaining his ends; and his ends were not, as heretofore, the simple ruin of the d'Esgrignons, but the dishonor of their house. He felt instinctively at such times that his revenge was at hand; he scented it in the wind! He had been sure of it indeed from the day when he discovered that the young Count's burden of debt was growing too heavy for the boy to bear.

Du Croisier's first step was to rid himself of his most hated enemy, the venerable Chesnel. The good old man lived in the Rue du Bercail, in a house with a steep-pitched roof. There was a little paved courtyard in front, where the rose-bushes grew and clambered up to the windows of the upper story. Behind lay a little country garden, with its box-edged borders, shut in by damp, gloomy-looking walls. The prim, gray-painted street door, with its wicket opening and bell attached, announced quite as plainly as the official scutcheon that "a notary lives here."

It was half-past five o'clock in the afternoon, at which hour the old man usually sat digesting his dinner. He had drawn

his black leather-covered armchair before the fire, and put on his armor, a painted pasteboard contrivance shaped like a top boot, which protected his stockinged legs from the heat of the fire; for it was one of the good man's habits to sit for a while after dinner with his feet on the dogs and to stir up the glowing coals. He always ate too much; he was fond of good living. Alas! if it had not been for that little failing, would he not have been more perfect than it is permitted to mortal man to be? Chesnel had finished his cup of coffee. His old housekeeper had just taken away the tray which had been used for the purpose for the last twenty years. He was waiting for his clerks to go before he himself went out for his game at cards, and meanwhile he was thinking—no need to ask of whom or what. A day seldom passed but he asked himself, "Where is *he?* What is *he* doing?" He thought that the Count was in Italy with the fair Duchesse de Maufrigneuse.

When every franc of a man's fortune has come to him, not by inheritance, but through his own earning and saving, it is one of his sweetest pleasures to look back upon the pains that have gone to the making of it, and then to plan out a future for his crowns. This it is to conjugate the verb "to enjoy" in every tense. And the old lawyer, whose affections were all bound up in a single attachment, was thinking that all the carefully-chosen, well-tilled land which he had pinched and scraped to buy would one day go to round the d'Esgrignon estates, and the thought doubled his pleasure. His pride swelled as he sat at his ease in the old armchair; and the building of glowing coals, which he raised with the tongs, sometimes seemed to him to be the old noble house built up again, thanks to his care. He pictured the young Count's prosperity, and told himself that he had done well to live for such an aim. Chesnel was not lacking in intelligence; sheer goodness was not the sole source of his great devotion; he had a pride of his own; he was like the nobles who used to rebuild a pillar in a cathedral to inscribe their name upon it; he meant his name to be remembered by the great house which

he had restored. Future generations of d'Esgrignons should speak of old Chesnel. Just at this point his old housekeeper came in with signs of extreme alarm in her countenance.

"Is the house on fire, Brigitte?"

"Something of the sort," said she. "Here is M. du Croisier wanting to speak to you——"

"M. du Croisier," repeated the old lawyer. A stab of cold misgiving gave him so sharp a pang at the heart that he dropped the tongs. "M. du Croisier here!" thought he, "our chief enemy!"

Du Croisier came in at that moment, like a cat that scents milk in a dairy. He made a bow, seated himself quietly in the easy-chair which the lawyer brought forward, and produced a bill for two hundred and twenty-seven thousand francs, principal and interest, the total amount of sums advanced to M. Victurnien in bills of exchange drawn upon du Croisier, and duly honored by him. Of these, he now demanded immediate payment, with a threat of proceeding to extremities with the heir-presumptive of the house. Chesnel turned the unlucky letters over one by one, and asked the enemy to keep the secret. This he engaged to do if he were paid within forty-eight hours. He was pressed for money; he had obliged various manufacturers; and there followed a series of the financial fictions by which neither notaries nor borrowers are deceived. Chesnel's eyes were dim; he could scarcely keep back the tears. There was but one way of raising the money; he must mortgage his own lands up to their full value. But when du Croisier learned the difficulty in the way of repayment, he forgot that he was hard pressed; he no longer wanted ready money, and suddenly came out with a proposal to buy the old lawyer's property. The sale was completed within two days. Poor Chesnel could not bear the thought of the son of the house undergoing a five years' imprisonment for debt. So in a few days' time nothing remained to him but his practice, the sums that were due to him, and the house in which he lived. Chesnel, stripped of all his lands, paced to and fro in his private office, paneled

with dark oak, his eyes fixed on the beveled edges of the chestnut cross-beams of the ceiling, or on the trellised vines in the garden outside. He was not thinking of his farms now, nor of Le Jard, his dear house in the country; not he.

"What will become of him? He ought to come back; they must marry him to some rich heiress," he said to himself; and his eyes were dim, his head heavy.

How to approach Mlle. Armande, and in what words to break the news to her, he did not know. The man who had just paid the debts of the family quaked at the thought of confessing these things. He went from the Rue du Bercail to the Hôtel d'Esgrignon with pulses throbbing like some girl's heart when she leaves her father's roof by stealth, not to return again till she is a mother and her heart is broken.

Mlle. Armande had just received a charming letter, charming in its hypocrisy. Her nephew was the happiest man under the sun. He had been to the baths, he had been traveling in Italy with Mme. de Maufrigneuse, and now sent his journal to his aunt. Every sentence was instinct with love. There were enchanting descriptions of Venice, and fascinating appreciations of the great works of Venetian art; there were most wonderful pages full of the Duomo at Milan, and again of Florence; he described the Apennines, and how they differed from the Alps, and how in some village like Chiavari happiness lay all around you, ready made.

The poor aunt was under the spell. She saw the far-off country of love, she saw, hovering above the land, the angel whose tenderness gave to all that beauty a burning glow. She was drinking in the letter at long draughts; how should it have been otherwise? The girl who had put love from her was now a woman ripened by repressed and pent-up passion, by all the longings continually and gladly offered up as a sacrifice on the altar of the hearth. Mlle. Armande was not like the Duchess. She did not look like an angel. She was rather like the little, straight, slim and slender, ivory-tinted statues, which those wonderful sculptors, the builders of cathedrals, placed here and there about the buildings. Wild

plants sometimes find a hold in the damp niches, and weave a crown of beautiful bluebell flowers about the carved stone. At this moment the blue buds were unfolding in the fair saint's eyes. Mlle. Armande loved the charming couple as if they stood apart from real life; she saw nothing wrong in a married woman's love for Victurnien; any other woman she would have judged harshly; but in this case, not to have loved her nephew would have been the unpardonable sin. Aunts, mothers, and sisters have a code of their own for nephews and sons and brothers.

Mlle. Armande was in Venice; she saw the lines of fairy palaces that stand on either side of the Grand Canal; she was sitting in Victurnien's gondola; he was telling her what happiness it had been to feel that the Duchess' beautiful hand lay in his own, to know that she loved him as they floated together on the breast of the amorous Queen of Italian seas. But even in that moment of bliss, such as angels know, some one appeared in the garden walk. It was Chesnel! Alas! the sound of his tread on the gravel might have been the sound of the sands running from Death's hour-glass to be trodden under his unshod feet. The sound, the sight of a dreadful hopelessness in Chesnel's face, gave her that painful shock which follows a sudden recall of the senses when the soul has sent them forth into the world of dreams.

"What is it?" she cried, as if some stab had pierced to her heart.

"All is lost!" said Chesnel. "M. le Comte will bring dishonor upon the house if we do not set it in order." He held out the bills, and described the agony of the last few days in a few simple but vigorous and touching words.

"He is deceiving us! The miserable boy!" cried Mlle. Armande, her heart swelling as the blood surged back to it in heavy throbs.

"Let us both say *mea culpa,* mademoiselle," the old lawyer said stoutly; "we have always allowed him to have his own way; he needed stern guidance; he could not have it from you with your inexperience of life; nor from me, for he would not listen to me. He has had no mother."

"Fate sometimes deals terribly with a noble house in decay," said Mlle. Armande, with tears in her eyes.

The Marquis came up as she spoke. He had been walking up and down the garden while he read the letter sent by his son after his return. Victurnien gave his itinerary from an aristocrat's point of view; telling how he had been welcomed by the greatest Italian families of Genoa, Turin, Milan, Florence, Venice, Rome, and Naples. This flattering reception he owed to his name, he said, and partly, perhaps, to the Duchess as well. In short, he had made his appearance magnificently, and as befitted a d'Esgrignon.

"Have you been at your old tricks, Chesnel?" asked the Marquis.

Mlle. Armande made Chesnel an eager sign, dreadful to see. They understood each other. The poor father, the flower of feudal honor, must die with all his illusions. A compact of silence and devotion was ratified between the two noble hearts by a simple inclination of the head.

"Ah! Chesnel, it was not exactly in this way that the d'Esgrignons went into Italy at the end of the fourteenth century, when Marshal Trivulzio, in the service of the King of France, served under a d'Esgrignon, who had a Bayard too under his orders. Other times, other pleasures. And, for that matter, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse is at least the equal of a Marchesa di Spinola."

And, on the strength of his genealogical tree, the old man swung himself off with a coxcomb's air, as if he himself had once made a conquest of the Marchesa di Spinola, and still possessed the Duchess of to-day.

The two companions in unhappiness were left together on the garden bench, with the same thought for a bond of union. They sat for a long time, saying little save vague, unmeaning words, watching the father walk away in his happiness, gesticulating as if he were talking to himself.

"What will become of him now?" Mlle. Armande asked after a while.

"Du Croisier has sent instructions to the MM. Keller; he

is not to be allowed to draw any more without authorization."

"And there are debts," continued Mlle. Armande.

"I am afraid so."

"If he is left without resources, what will he do?"

"I dare not answer that question to myself."

"But he must be drawn out of that life, he must come back to us, or he will have nothing left."

"And nothing else left to him," Chesnel said gloomily. But Mlle. Armande as yet did not and could not understand the full force of those words.

"Is there any hope of getting him away from that woman, that Duchess? Perhaps she leads him on."

"He would not stick at a crime to be with her," said Chesnel, trying to pave the way to an intolerable thought by others less intolerable.

"Crime," repeated Mlle. Armande. "Oh, Chesnel, no one but you would think of such a thing!" she added, with a withering look; before such a look from a woman's eyes no mortal can stand. "There is but one crime that a noble can commit—the crime of high treason; and when he is beheaded, the block is covered with a black cloth, as it is for kings."

"The times have changed very much," said Chesnel, shaking his head. Victurnien had thinned his last thin, white hairs. "Our Martyr-King did not die like the English King Charles."

That thought soothed Mlle. Armande's splendid indignation; a shudder ran through her; but still she did not realize what Chesnel meant.

"To-morrow we will decide what we must do," she said; "it needs thought. At the worst, we have our lands."

"Yes," said Chesnel. "You and M. le Marquis own the estate conjointly; but the larger part of it is yours. You can raise money upon it without saying a word to him."

The players at whist, reversis, boston, and back-

gammon noticed that evening that Mlle. Armande's features, usually so serene and pure, showed signs of agitation.

"That poor heroic child!" said the old Marquise de Castéran, "she must be suffering still. A woman never knows what her sacrifices to her family may cost her."

Next day it was arranged with Chesnel that Mlle. Armande should go to Paris to snatch her nephew from perdition. If any one could carry off Victurnien, was it not the woman whose motherly heart yearned over him? Mlle. Armande made up her mind that she would go to the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and tell her all. Still, some sort of pretext was necessary to explain the journey to the Marquis and the whole town. At some cost to her maidenly delicacy, Mlle. Armande allowed it to be thought that she was suffering from a complaint which called for a consultation of skilled and celebrated physicians. Goodness knows whether the town talked of this or no! But Mlle. Armande saw that something far more to her than her own reputation was at stake. She set out. Chesnel brought her his last bag of louis; she took it, without paying any attention to it, as she took her white capuchine and thread mittens.

"Generous girl! What grace!" he said, as he put her into the carriage with her maid, a woman who looked like a gray sister.

Du Croisier had thought out his revenge, as provincials think out everything. For studying out a question in all its bearings, there are no folk in this world like savages, peasants, and provincials; and this is how, when they proceed from thought to action, you find every contingency provided for from beginning to end. Diplomatists are children compared with these classes of mammals; they have time before them, an element which is lacking to those people who are obliged to think about a great many things, to superintend the progress of all kinds of schemes, to look forward for all sorts of contingencies in the wider interests of human affairs. Had du Croisier sounded poor Victurnien's nature so well, that he foresaw how easily the young Count would lend himself

to his schemes of revenge? Or was he merely profiting by an opportunity for which he had been on the watch for years? One circumstance there was, to be sure, in his manner of preparing his stroke, which shows a certain skill. Who was it that gave du Croisier warning of the moment? Was it the Kellers? Or could it have been President du Ronceret's son, then finishing his law studies in Paris?

Du Croisier wrote to Victurnien, telling him that the Kellers had been instructed to advance no more money; and that letter was timed to arrive just as the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse was in the utmost perplexity, and the Comte d'Esgrignon consumed by the sense of a poverty as dreadful as it was cunningly hidden. The wretched young man was exerting all his ingenuity to seem as if he were wealthy!

Now in the letter which informed the victim that in future the Kellers would make no further advances without security, there was a tolerably wide space left between the forms of an exaggerated respect and the signature. It was quite easy to tear off the best part of the letter and convert it into a bill of exchange for any amount. The diabolical missive had even been enclosed in an envelope, so that the other side of the sheet was blank. When it arrived, Victurnien was writhing in the lowest depths of despair. After two years of the most prosperous, sensual, thoughtless, and luxurious life, he found himself face to face with the most inexorable poverty; it was an absolute impossibility to procure money. There had been some throes of crisis before the journey came to an end. With the Duchess' help he had managed to extort various sums from bankers; but it had been with the greatest difficulty, and, moreover, those very amounts were about to start up again before him as overdue bills of exchange in all their rigor, with a stern summons to pay from the Bank of France and the commercial court. All through the enjoyments of those last weeks the unhappy boy had felt the point of the Commander's sword; at every supper-party he heard, like Don Juan, the heavy tread of the statue outside upon the stairs. He felt an unaccountable creeping of the flesh,

a warning that the sirocco of debt is nigh at hand. He reckoned on chance. For five years he had never turned up a blank in the lottery; his purse had always been replenished. After Chesnel had come du Croisier (he told himself), after du Croisier surely another gold mine would pour out its wealth. And besides, he was winning great sums at play; his luck at play had saved him several unpleasant steps already; and often a wild hope sent him to the Salon des Etrangers only to lose his winnings afterwards at whist at the club. His life for the past two months had been like the immortal finale of Mozart's *Don Giovanni;* and of a truth, if a young man has come to such a plight as Victurnien's, that finale is enough to make him shudder. Can anything better prove the enormous power of music than that sublime rendering of the disorder and confusion arising out of a life wholly given up to sensual indulgence? that fearful picture of a deliberate effort to shut out the thought of debts and duels, deceit and evil luck? In that music Mozart disputes the palm with Molière. The terrific finale, with its glow, its power, its despair and laughter, its grisly spectres and elfish women, centres about the prodigal's last effort made in the after-supper heat of wine, the frantic struggle which ends the drama. Victurnien was living through this infernal poem, and alone. He saw visions of himself—a friendless, solitary outcast, reading the words carved on the stone, the last words on the last page of the book that had held him spellbound—THE END!

Yes; for him all would be at an end, and that soon. Already he saw the cold, ironical eyes which his associates would turn upon him, and their amusement over his downfall. Some of them he knew were playing high on that gambling-table kept open all day long at the Bourse, or in private houses at the clubs, and anywhere and everywhere in Paris; but not one of these men could spare a banknote to save an intimate. There was no help for it—Chesnel must be ruined. He had devoured Chesnel's living.

He sat with the Duchess in their box at the Italiens, the

whole house envying them their happiness, and while he smiled at her, all the Furies were tearing at his heart. Indeed, to give some idea of the depths of doubt, despair, and incredulity in which the boy was groveling; he who so clung to life—the life which the angel had made so fair—who so loved it, that he would have stooped to baseness merely to live; he, the pleasure-loving scapegrace, the degenerate d'Esgrignon, had even taken out his pistols, had gone so far as to think of suicide. He who would never have brooked the appearance of an insult was abusing himself in language which no man is likely to hear except from himself.

He left du Croisier's letter lying open on the bed. Joséphin had brought it in at nine o'clock. Victurnien's furniture had been seized, but he slept none the less. After he came back from the Opéra, he and the Duchess had gone to a voluptuous retreat, where they often spent a few hours together after the most brilliant court balls and evening parties and gaieties. Appearances were very cleverly saved. Their love-nest was a garret like any other to all appearance; Mme. de Maufrigneuse was obliged to bow her head with its court feathers or wreath of flowers to enter in at the door; but within all the peris of the East had made the chamber fair. And now that the Count was on the brink of ruin, he had longed to bid farewell to the dainty nest, which he had built to realize a day-dream worthy of his angel. Presently adversity would break the enchanted eggs; there would be no brood of white doves, no brilliant tropical birds, no more of the thousand bright-winged fancies which hover above our heads even to the last days of our lives. Alas! alas! in three days he must be gone; his bills had fallen into the hands of the money-lenders, the law proceedings had reached the last stage.

An evil thought crossed his brain. He would fly with the Duchess; they would live in some undiscovered nook in the wilds of North or South America; but—he would fly with a fortune, and leave his creditors to confront their bills. To carry out the plan, he had only to cut off the lower portion

of that letter with du Croisier's signature, and to fill in the figures to turn it into a bill, and present it to the Kellers. There was a dreadful struggle with temptation; tears were shed, but the honor of the family triumphed, subject to one condition. Victurnien wanted to be sure of his beautiful Diane; he would do nothing unless she should consent to their flight. So he went to the Duchess in the Rue Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and found her in coquettish morning dress, which cost as much in thought as in money, a fit dress in which to begin to play the part of Angel at eleven o'clock in the morning.

Mme. de Maufrigneuse was somewhat pensive. Cares of a similar kind were gnawing her mind; but she took them gallantly. Of all the various feminine organizations classified by physiologists, there is one that has something indescribably terrible about it. Such women combine strength of soul and clear insight, with a faculty for prompt decision, and a recklessness, or rather resolution in a crisis which would shake a man's nerves. And these powers lie out of sight beneath an appearance of the most graceful helplessness. Such women only among womankind afford examples of a phenomenon which Buffon recognized in men alone, to wit, the union, or rather the disunion, of two different natures in one human being. Other women are wholly women; wholly tender, wholly devoted, wholly mothers, completely null and completely tiresome; nerves and brain and blood are all in harmony; but the Duchess, and others like her, are capable of rising to the highest heights of feelings, or of showing the most selfish insensibility. It is one of the glories of Molière that he has given us a wonderful portrait of such a woman, from one point of view only, in that greatest of his full-length figures—Célimène; Célimène is the typical aristocratic woman, as Figaro, the second edition of Panurge, represents the people.

So the Duchess, being overwhelmed with debt, laid it upon herself to give no more than a moment's thought to the avalanche of cares, and to take her resolution once and for

all; Napoleon could take up or lay down the burden of his thoughts in precisely the same way. The Duchess possessed the faculty of standing aloof from herself; she could look on as a spectator at the crash when it came, instead of submitting to be buried beneath. This was certainly great, but repulsive in a woman. When she awoke in the morning she collected her thoughts; and by the time she had begun to dress she had looked at the danger in its fullest extent and faced the possibilities of terrific downfall. She pondered. Should she take refuge in a foreign country? Or should she go to the King and declare her debts to him? Or again, should she fascinate a du Tillet or a Nucingen, and gamble on the stock exchange to pay her creditors? The city man would find the money; he would be intelligent enough to bring her nothing but the profits, without so much as mentioning the losses, a piece of delicacy which would gloss all over. The catastrophe, and these various ways of averting it, had all been reviewed quite coolly, calmly, and without trepidation.

As a naturalist takes up some king of butterflies and fastens him down on cotton-wool with a pin, so Mme. de Maufrigneuse had plucked love out of her heart while she pondered the necessity of the moment, and was quite ready to replace the beautiful passion on its immaculate setting so soon as her duchess' coronet was safe. *She* knew none of the hesitation which Cardinal Richelieu hid from all the world but Père Joseph; none of the doubts that Napoleon kept at first entirely to himself. "Either the one or the other," she told herself.

She was sitting by the fire, giving orders for her toilette for a drive in the Bois if the weather should be fine, when Victurnien came in.

The Comte d'Esgrignon, with all his stifled capacity, his so keen intellect, was in exactly the state which might have been looked for in the woman. His heart was beating violently, the perspiration broke out over him as he stood in his dandy's trappings; he was afraid as yet to lay a hand

on the corner-stone which upheld the pyramid of his life with Diane. So much it cost him to know the truth. The cleverest men are fain to deceive themselves on one or two points if the truth once known is likely to humiliate them in their own eyes, and damage themselves with themselves. Victurnien forced his own irresolution into the field by committing himself.

"What is the matter with you?" Diane de Maufrigneuse had said at once, at the sight of her beloved Victurnien's face.

"Why, dear Diane, I am in such perplexity; a man gone to the bottom and at his last gasp is happy in comparison."

"Pshaw! it is nothing," said she; "you are a child. Let us see now; tell me about it."

"I am hopelessly in debt. I have come to the end of my tether."

"Is that all?" said she, smiling at him. "Money matters can always be arranged somehow or other; nothing is irretrievable except disasters in love."

Victurnien's mind being set at rest by this swift comprehension of his position, he unrolled the bright-colored web of his life for the last two years and a half; but it was the seamy side of it which he displayed with something of genius, and still more of wit, to his Diane. He told his tale with the inspiration of the moment, which fails no one in great crises; he had sufficient artistic skill to set it off by a varnish of delicate scorn for men and things. It was an aristocrat who spoke. And the Duchess listened as she could listen.

One knee was raised, for she sat with her foot on a stool. She rested her elbow on her knee and leant her face on her hand so that her fingers closed daintily over her shapely chin Her eyes never left his; but thoughts by myriads flitted under the blue surface, like gleams of stormy light between two clouds. Her forehead was calm, her mouth gravely intent—grave with love; her lips were knotted fast by Victurnien's lips. To have her listening thus was to believe that a divine

love flowed from her heart. Wherefore, when the Count had proposed flight to this soul, so closely knit to his own, he could not help crying, "You are an angel!"

The fair Maufrigneuse made silent answer; but she had not spoken as yet.

"Good, very good," she said at last. (She had not given herself up to the love expressed in her face; her mind had been entirely absorbed by deep-laid schemes which she kept to herself.) "But *that* is not the question, dear." (The "angel" was only "that" by this time.) "Let us think of your affairs. Yes, we will go, and the sooner the better. Arrange it all; I will follow you. It is glorious to leave Paris and the world behind. I will set about my preparations in such a way that no one can suspect anything."

I will follow you! Just so Mlle. Mars might have spoken those words to send a thrill through two thousand listening men and women. When a Duchesse de Maufrigneuse offers, in such words, to make such a sacrifice to love, she has paid her debt. How should Victurnien speak of sordid details after that? He could so much the better hide his schemes, because Diane was particularly careful not to inquire into them. She was now, and always, as de Marsay said, an invited guest at a banquet wreathed with roses, a banquet which mankind, as in duty bound, made ready for her.

Victurnien would not go till the promise had been sealed. He must draw courage from his happiness before he could bring himself to do a deed on which, as he inwardly told himself, people would be certain to put a bad construction. Still (and this was the thought that decided him) he counted on his aunt and father to hush up the affair; he even counted on Chesnel. Chesnel would think of one more compromise. Besides, "this business," as he called it in his thoughts, was the only way of raising money on the family estate. With three hundred thousand francs, he and Diane would lead a happy life hidden in some palace in Venice; and there they would forget the world. They went through their romance in advance.

Next day Victurnien made out a bill for three hundred thousand francs, and took it to the Kellers. The Kellers advanced the money, for du Croisier happened to have a balance at the time; but they wrote to let him know that he must not draw again on them without giving them notice. Du Croisier, much astonished, asked for a statement of accounts. It was sent. Everything was explained. The day of his vengeance had arrived.

When Victurnien had drawn "his" money, he took it to Mme. de Maufrigneuse. She locked up the banknotes in her desk, and proposed to bid the world farewell by going to the Opéra to see it for the last time. Victurnien was thoughtful, absent, and uneasy. He was beginning to reflect. He thought that his seat in the Duchess' box might cost him dear; that perhaps, when he had put the three hundred thousand francs in safety, it would be better to travel post, to fall at Chesnel's feet, and tell him all. But before they left the opera-house, the Duchess, in spite of herself, gave Victurnien an adorable glance, her eyes were shining with the desire to go back once more to bid farewell to the nest which she loved so much. And boy that he was, he lost a night.

The next day, at three o'clock, he was back again at the Hôtel de Maufrigneuse; he had come to take the Duchess' orders for that night's escape. And, "Why should we go?" asked she; "I have thought it all out. The Vicomtesse de Beauséant and the Duchesse de Langeais disappeared. If I go too, it will be something quite commonplace. We will brave the storm. It will be a far finer thing to do. I am sure of success." Victurnien's eyes dazzled; he felt as if his skin were dissolving and the blood oozing out all over him.

"What is the matter with you?" cried the fair Diane, noticing a hesitation which a woman never forgives. Your truly adroit lover will hasten to agree with any fancy that Woman may take into her head, and suggest reasons for doing otherwise, while leaving her free exercise of her right to change

her mind, her intentions, and sentiments generally as often as she pleases. Victurnien was angry for the first time, angry with the wrath of a weak man of poetic temperament; it was a storm of rain and lightning flashes, but no thunder followed. The angel on whose faith he had risked more than his life, the honor of his house, was very roughly handled.

"So," said she, "we have come to this after eighteen months of tenderness! You are unkind, very unkind. Go away!—I do not want to see you again. I thought that you loved me. You do not."

"I do not love you?" repeated he, thunderstruck by the reproach.

"No, monsieur."

"And yet——" he cried. "Ah! if you but knew what I have just done for your sake!"

"And how have you done so much for me, monsieur? As if a man ought not to do anything for a woman that has done so much for him."

"You are not worthy to know it!" Victurnien cried in a passion of anger.

"Oh!"

After that sublime "Oh!" Diane bowed her head on her hand and sat, still, cold, and implacable as angels naturally may be expected to do, seeing that they share none of the passions of humanity. At the sight of the woman he loved in this terrible attitude, Victurnien forgot his danger. Had he not just that moment wronged the most angelic creature on earth? He longed for forgiveness, he threw himself before her, he kissed her feet, he pleaded, he wept. Two whole hours the unhappy young man spent in all kinds of follies, only to meet the same cold face, while the great silent tears dropping one by one, were dried as soon as they fell lest the unworthy lover should try to wipe them away. The Duchess was acting a great agony, one of those hours which stamp the woman who passes through them as something august and sacred.

Two more hours went by. By this time the Count had

gained possession of Diane's hand; it felt cold and spiritless The beautiful hand, with all the treasures in its grasp, might have been supple wood; there was nothing of Diane in it; he had taken it, it had not been given to him. As for Victurnien, the spirit had ebbed out of his frame, he had ceased to think. He would not have seen the sun in heaven. What was to be done? What course should he take? What resolution should he make? The man who can keep his head in such circumstances must be made of the same stuff as the convict who spent the night in robbing the Bibliothèque Royale of its gold medals, and repaired to his honest brother in the morning with a request to melt down the plunder. "What is to be done?" cried the brother. "Make me some coffee," replied the thief. Victurnien sank into a bewildered stupor, darkness settled down over his brain. Visions of past rapture flitted across the misty gloom like the figures that Raphael painted against a black background; to these he must bid farewell. Inexorable and disdainful, the Duchess played with the tip of her scarf. She looked in irritation at Victurnien from time to time; she coquetted with memories, she spoke to her lover of his rivals as if anger had finally decided her to prefer one of them to a man who could so change in one moment after twenty-eight months of love.

"Ah! that charming young Félix de Vandenesse, so faithful as he was to Mme. de Mortsauf, would never have permitted himself such a scene! He can love, can de Vandenesse! De Marsay, that terrible de Marsay, such a tiger as every one thought him, was rough with other men; but, like all strong men, he kept his gentleness for women. Montriveau trampled the Duchesse de Langeais under foot, as Othello killed Desdemona, in a burst of fury which at any rate proved the extravagance of his love. It was not like a paltry squabble. There was rapture in being so crushed. Little, fair-haired, slim, and slender men loved to torment women; they could only reign over poor, weak creatures; it pleased them to have some ground for believing that they were men. The tyranny of love was their one chance of as

serting their power. She did not know why she had put herself at the mercy of fair hair. Such men as de Marsay, Montriveau, and Vandenesse, dark-haired and well grown, had a ray of sunlight in their eyes."

It was a storm of epigrams. Her speeches, like bullets, came hissing past his ears. Every word that Diane hurled at him was triple-barbed; she humiliated, stung, and wounded him with an art that was all her own, as half a score of savages can torture an enemy bound to a stake.

"You are mad!" he cried at last, at the end of his patience, and out he went in God knows what mood. He drove as if he had never handled the reins before, locked his wheels in the wheels of other vehicles, collided with the curbstone in the Place Louis-Quinze, went he knew not whither. The horse, left to its own devices, made a bolt for the stable along the Quai d'Orsay; but as he turned into the Rue de l'Université, Joséphin appeared to stop the runaway.

"You cannot go home, sir," the old man said, with a scared face; "they have come with a warrant to arrest you."

Victurnien thought that he had been arrested on the criminal charge, albeit there had not been time for the public prosecutor to receive his instructions. He had forgotten the matter of the bills of exchange, which had been stirred up again for some days past in the form of orders to pay, brought by the officers of the court with accompaniments in the shape of bailiffs, men in possession, magistrates, commissaries, policemen, and other representatives of social order. Like most guilty creatures, Victurnien had forgotten everything but his crime.

"It is all over with me," he cried.

"No, M. le Comte, drive as fast as you can to the Hôtel du Bon la Fontaine, in the Rue de Grenelle. Mlle. Armande is waiting there for you, the horses have been put in, she will take you with her."

Victurnien, in his trouble, caught like a drowning man at the branch that came to his hand; he rushed off to the inn, reached the place, and flung his arms about his aunt. Mlle.

Armande cried as if her heart would break; any one might have thought that she had a share in her nephew's guilt. They stepped into the carriage. A few minutes later they were on the road to Brest, and Paris lay behind them. Victurnien uttered not a sound; he was paralyzed. And when aunt and nephew began to speak, they talked at cross purposes; Victurnien, still laboring under the unlucky misapprehension which flung him into Mlle. Armande's arms, was thinking of his forgery; his aunt had the debts and the bills on her mind.

"You know all, aunt," he had said.

"Poor boy, yes, but we are here. I am not going to scold you just yet. Take heart."

"I must hide somewhere."

"Perhaps. . . . Yes, it is a very good idea."

"Perhaps I might get into Chesnel's house without being seen if we timed ourselves to arrive in the middle of the night?"

"That will be best. We shall be better able to hide this from my brother.—Poor angel! how unhappy he is!" said she, petting the unworthy child.

"Ah! now I begin to know what dishonor means; it has chilled my love."

"Unhappy boy; what bliss and what misery!" And Mlle. Armande drew his fevered face to her breast and kissed his forehead, cold and damp though it was, as the holy women might have kissed the brow of the dead Christ when they laid Him in His grave clothes. Following out the excellent scheme suggested by the prodigal son, he was brought by night to the quiet house in the Rue du Bercail; but chance ordered it that by so doing he ran straight into the wolf's jaws, as the saying goes. That evening Chesnel had been making arrangements to sell his connection to M. Lepressoir's head-clerk. M. Lepressoir was the notary employed by the Liberals, just as Chesnel's practice lay among the aristocratic families. The young fellow's relatives were rich enough to pay Chesnel the considerable sum of a hundred thousand francs in cash.

Chesnel was rubbing his hands. "A hundred thousand francs will go a long way in buying up debts," he thought. "The young man is paying a high rate of interest on his loans. We will lock him up down here. I will go yonder myself and bring those curs to terms."

Chesnel, honest Chesnel, upright, worthy Chesnel, called his darling Comte Victurnien's creditors "curs."

Meanwhile his successor was making his way along the Rue du Bercail just as Mlle. Armande's traveling carriage turned into it. Any young man might be expected to feel some curiosity if he saw a traveling carriage stop at a notary's door in such a town and at such an hour of the night; the young man in question was sufficiently inquisitive to stand in a doorway and watch. He saw Mlle. Armande alight.

"Mlle. Armande d'Esgrignon at this time of night!" said he to himself. "What can be going forward at the d'Esgrignons'?"

At the sight of mademoiselle, Chesnel opened the door circumspectly and set down the light which he was carrying; but when he looked out and saw Victurnien, Mlle. Armande's first whispered word made the whole thing plain to him. He looked up and down the street; it seemed quite deserted; he beckoned, and the young Count sprang out of the carriage and entered the courtyard. All was lost. Chesnel's successor had discovered Victurnien's hiding-place.

Victurnien was hurried into the house and installed in a room beyond Chesnel's private office. No one could enter it except across the old man's dead body.

"Ah! M. le Comte!" exclaimed Chesnel, notary no longer.

"Yes, monsieur," the Count answered, understanding his old friend's exclamation. "I did not listen to you; and now I have fallen into the depths, and I must perish."

"No, no," the good man answered, looking triumphantly from Mlle. Armande to the Count. "I have sold my connection. I have been working for a very long time now, and am thinking of retiring. By noon to-morrow I shall have a hundred thousand francs; many things can be settled with

that. Mademoiselle, you are tired," he added; "go back to the carriage and go home and sleep. Business to-morrow."

"Is he safe?" returned she, looking at Victurnien.

"Yes."

She kissed her nephew; a few tears fell on his forehead. Then she went.

"My good Chesnel," said the Count, when they began to talk of business, "what are your hundred thousand francs in such a position as mine? You do not know the full extent of my troubles, I think."

Victurnien explained the situation. Chesnel was thunderstruck. But for the strength of his devotion, he would have succumbed to this blow. Tears streamed from the eyes that might well have had no tears left to shed. For a few moments he was a child again, for a few moments he was bereft of his senses; he stood like a man who should find his own house on fire, and through a window see the cradle ablaze and hear the hiss of the flames on his children's curls. He rose to his full height—*il se dressa en pied,* as Amyot would have said; he seemed to grow taller; he raised his withered hands and wrung them despairingly and wildly.

"If only your father may die and never know this, young man! To be a forger is enough; a parricide you must not be. Fly, you say? No. They would condemn you for contempt of court! Oh, wretched boy! Why did you not forge *my* signature? *I* would have paid; I should not have taken the bill to the public prosecutor.—Now I can do nothing. You have brought me to a stand in the lowest pit in hell!——Du Croisier! What will come of it? What is to be done?—If you had killed a man, there might be some help for it. But forgery—*forgery!* And time—the time is flying," he went on, shaking his fist towards the old clock. "You will want a sham passport now. One crime leads to another. First," he added, after a pause, "first of all we must save the house of d'Esgrignon."

"But the money is still in Mme. de Maufrigneuse's keeping," exclaimed Victurnien.

"Ah!" exclaimed Chesnel. "Well, there is some hope left —a faint hope. Could we soften du Croisier, I wonder, or buy him over? He shall have all the lands if he likes. I will go to him; I will wake him and offer him all we have.—Besides, it was not you who forged that bill; it was I. I will go to jail; I am too old for the hulks, they can only put me in prison."

"But the body of the bill is in my handwriting," objected Victurnien, without a sign of surprise at this reckless devotion.

"Idiot! . . . that is, pardon, M. le Comte. Joséphin should have been made to write it," the old notary cried wrathfully. "He is a good creature; he would have taken it all on his shoulders. But there is an end of it; the world is falling to pieces," the old man continued, sinking exhausted into a chair. "Du Croisier is a tiger; we must be careful not to rouse him. What time is it? Where is the draft? If it is at Paris, it might be bought back from the Kellers; they might accommodate us. Ah! but there are dangers on all sides; a single false step means ruin. Money is wanted in any case. But, there! nobody knows you are here, you must live buried away in the cellar if needs must. I will go at once to Paris as fast as I can; I can hear the mail coach from Brest."

In a moment the old man recovered the faculties of his youth—his agility and vigor. He packed up clothes for the journey, took money, brought a six-pound loaf to the little room beyond the office, and turned the key on his child by adoption.

"Not a sound in here," he said, "no light at night; and stop here till I come back, or you will go to the hulks. Do you understand, M. le Comte? Yes, *to the hulks!* if anybody in a town like this knows that you are here."

With that Chesnel went out, first telling his housekeeper to give out that he was ill, to allow no one to come into the house, to send everybody away, and to postpone business of every kind for three days. He wheedled the manager of

the coach-office, made up a tale for his benefit—he had the makings of an ingenious novelist in him—and obtained a promise that if there should be a place, he should have it, passport or no passport, as well as a further promise to keep the hurried departure a secret. Luckily, the coach was empty when it arrived.

In the middle of the following night Chesnel was set down in Paris. At nine o'clock in the morning he waited on the Kellers, and learned that the fatal draft had returned to du Croisier three days since; but while obtaining this information, he in no way committed himself. Before he went away he inquired whether the draft could be recovered if the amount were refunded. François Keller's answer was to the effect that the document was du Croisier's property, and that it was entirely in his power to keep or return it. Then, in desperation, the old man went to the Duchess.

Mme. de Maufrigneuse was not at home to any visitor at that hour. Chesnel, feeling that every moment was precious, sat down in the hall, wrote a few lines, and succeeded in sending them to the lady by dint of wheedling, fascinating, bribing, and commanding the most insolent and inaccessible servants in the world. The Duchess was still in bed; but, to the great astonishment of her household, the old man in black knee-breeches, ribbed stockings, and shoes with buckles to them, was shown into her room.

"What is it, monsieur?" she asked, posing in her disorder. "What does he want of me, ungrateful that he is?"

"It is this, Mme. la Duchesse," the good man exclaimed, "you have a hundred thousand crowns belonging to us."

"Yes," began she. "What does it signify——?"

"The money was gained by a forgery, for which we are going to the hulks, a forgery which we committed for love of you," Chesnel said quickly. "How is it that you did not guess it, so clever as you are? Instead of scolding the boy, you ought to have had the truth out of him, and stopped him while there was time, and saved him."

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of her behavior to so impassioned a lover, and afraid besides that she might be suspected of complicity. In her wish to prove that she had not touched the money left in her keeping, she lost all regard for appearances; and besides, it did not occur to her that a notary was a man. She flung off the eider-down quilt, sprang to her desk (flitting past the lawyer like an angel out of one the vignettes which illustrate Lamartine's books), held out the notes, and went back in confusion to bed.

"You are an angel, madame." (She was to be an angel for all the world, it seemed.) "But this will not be the end of it. I count upon your influence to save us."

"To save you! I will do it or die! Love that will not shrink from a crime must be love indeed. Is there a woman in the world for whom such a thing has been done? Poor boy! Come, do not lose time, dear M. Chesnel; and count upon me as upon yourself."

"Mme. la Duchesse! Mme. la Duchesse!" It was all that he could say, so overcome was he. He cried, he could have danced; but he was afaid of losing his senses, and refrained.

"Between us, we will save him," she said, as he left the room.

Chesnel went straight to Joséphin. Joséphin unlocked the young Count's desk and writing-table. Very luckily, the notary found letters which might be useful, letters from du Croisier and the Kellers. Then he took a place in a diligence which was just about to start; and by dint of fees to the postilions, the lumbering vehicle went as quickly as the coach. His two fellow-passengers on the journey happened to be in as great a hurry as himself, and readily agreed to take their meals in the carriage. Thus swept over the road, the notary reached the Rue du Bercail, after three days of absence, an hour before midnight. And yet he was too late. He saw the gendarmes at the gate, crossed the threshold, and met the young Count in the courtyard. Victurnien had been arrested. If Chesnel had had the power, he would beyond a

doubt have killed the officers and men; as it was, he could only fall on Victurnien's neck.

"If I cannot hush this matter up, you must kill yourself before the indictment is made out," he whispered. But Victurnien had sunk into such stupor, that he stared back uncomprehendingly.

"Kill myself?" he repeated.

"Yes. If your courage should fail, my boy, count upon me," said Chesnel, squeezing Victurnien's hand.

In spite of his anguish of mind and tottering limbs, he stood firmly planted, to watch the son of his heart, the Comte d'Esgrignon, go out of the courtyard between two gendarmes, with the commissary, the justice of the peace, and the clerk of the court; and not until the figures had disappeared, and the sound of footsteps had died away into silence, did he recover his firmness and presence of mind.

"You will catch cold, sir," Brigitte remonstrated.

"The devil take you!" cried her exasperated master.

Never in the nine-and-twenty years that Brigitte had been in his service had she heard such words from him! Her candle fell out of her hands, but Chesnel neither heeded his housekeeper's alarm nor heard her exclaim. He hurried off towards the Val-Noble.

"He is out of his mind," said she; "after all, it is no wonder. But where is he off to? I cannot possibly go after him. What will become of him? Suppose that he should drown himself?"

And Brigitte went to waken the head-clerk and send him to look along the river bank; the river had a gloomy reputation just then, for there had lately been two cases of suicide —one a young man full of promise, and the other a girl, a victim of seduction. Chesnel went straight to the Hôtel du Croisier. There lay his only hope. The law requires that a charge of forgery must be brought by a private individual. It was still possible to withdraw if du Croisier chose to admit that there had been a misapprehension; and Chesnel had hopes, even then, of buying the man over.

M. and Mme. du Croisier had much more company than usual that evening. Only a few persons were in the secret. M. du Ronceret, president of the Tribunal; M. Sauvager, deputy Public Prosecutor; and M. du Coudrai, a registrar of mortgages, who had lost his post by voting on the wrong side, were the only persons who were supposed to know about it; but Mesdames du Ronceret and du Coudrai had told the news, in strict confidence, to one or two intimate friends, so that it had spread half over the semi-noble, semi-bourgeois assembly at M. du Croisier's. Everybody felt the gravity of the situation, but no one ventured to speak of it openly; and, moreover, Mme. du Croisier's attachment to the upper sphere was so well known, that people scarcely dared to mention the disaster which had befallen the d'Esgrignons or to ask for particulars. The persons most interested were waiting till good Mme. du Croisier retired, for that lady always retreated to her room at the same hour to perform her religious exercises as far as possible out of her husband's sight.

Du Croisier's adherents, knowing the secret and the plans of the great commercial power, looked round when the lady of the house disappeared; but there were still several persons present whose opinions or interests marked them out as untrustworthy, so they continued to play. About half past eleven all had gone save intimates: M. Sauvager, M. Camusot, the examining magistrate, and his wife, M. and Mme. du Ronceret and their son Fabien, M. and Mme. du Coudrai, and Joseph Blondet, the eldest son of an old judge; ten persons in all.

It is told of Talleyrand that one fatal day, three hours after midnight, he suddenly interrupted a game of cards in the Duchesse de Luynes' house by laying down his watch on the table and asking the players whether the Prince de Condé had any child but the Duc d'Enghien.

"Why do you ask?" returned Mme. de Luynes, "when you know so well that he has not."

"Because if the Prince has no other son, the House of Condé is now at an end."

There was a moment's pause, and they finished the game.

—President du Ronceret now did something very similar. Perhaps he had heard the anecdote; perhaps, in political life, little minds and great minds are apt to hit upon the same expression. He looked at his watch, and interrupted the game of boston with:

"At this moment M. le Comte d'Esgrignon is arrested, and that house which has held its head so high is dishonored forever."

"Then, have you got hold of the boy?" du Coudrai cried gleefully.

Every one in the room, with the exception of the President, the deputy, and du Croisier, looked startled.

"He has just been arrested in Chesnel's house, where he was hiding," said the deputy public prosecutor, with the air of a capable but unappreciated public servant, who ought by rights to be Minister of Police. M. Sauvager, the deputy, was a thin, tall young man of five-and-twenty, with a lengthy olive-hued countenance, black frizzled hair, and deep-set eyes; the wide, dark rings beneath them were completed by the wrinkled purple eyelids above. With a nose like the beak of some bird of prey, a pinched mouth, and cheeks worn lean with study and hollowed by ambition, he was the very type of a second-rate personage on the lookout for something to turn up, and ready to do anything if so he might get on in the world, while keeping within the limitations of the possible and the forms of law. His pompous expression was an admirable indication of the time-serving eloquence to be expected of him. Chesnel's successor had discovered the young Count's hiding place to him, and he took great credit to himself for his penetration.

The news seemed to come as a shock to the examining magistrate, M. Camusot, who had granted the warrant of arrest on Sauvager's application, with no idea that it was to be executed so promptly. Camusot was short, fair, and fat already, though he was only thirty years old or thereabouts; he had the flabby, livid look peculiar to officials who live shut up in their private study or in a court of justice;

and his little, pale, yellow eyes were full of the suspicion which is often mistaken for shrewdness.

Mme. Camusot looked at her spouse, as who should say, "Was I not right?"

"Then the case will come on," was Camusot's comment.

"Could you doubt it?" asked du Coudrai. "Now they have got the Count, all is over."

"There is the jury," said Camusot. "In this case M. le Préfet is sure to take care that after the challenges from the prosecution and the defence, the jury to a man will be for an acquittal.—My advice would be to come to a compromise," he added, turning to du Croisier.

"Compromise!" echoed the President; "why, he is in the hands of justice."

"Acquitted or convicted, the Comte d'Esgrignon will be dishonored all the same," put in Sauvager.

"I am bringing an action,"* said du Croisier. "I shall have Dupin senior. We shall see how the d'Esgrignon family will escape out of his clutches."

"The d'Esgrignons will defend the case and have counsel from Paris; they will have Berryer," said Mme. Camusot. "You will have a Roland for your Oliver."

Du Croisier, M. Sauvager, and the President du Ronceret looked at Camusot, and one thought troubled their minds. The lady's tone, the way in which she flung her proverb in the faces of the eight conspirators against the house of d'Esgrignon, caused them inward perturbation, which they dissembled as provincials can dissemble, by dint of lifelong practice in the shifts of a monastic existence. Little Mme. Camusot saw their change of countenance and subsequent composure when they scented opposition on the part of the examining magistrate. When her husband unveiled the thoughts in the back of his own mind, she had tried to plumb the depths of hate in du Croisier's adherents. She wanted to find out how du Croisier had gained over this deputy public

* A trial for an offence of this kind in France is an action brought by a private person (*partie civile*) to recover damages, and at the same time a criminal prosecution conducted on behalf of the Government.—TR.

prosecutor, who had acted so promptly and so directly in opposition to the views of the central power.

"In any case," continued she, "if celebrated counsel come down from Paris, there is a prospect of a very interesting session in the Court of Assize; but the matter will be snuffed out between the Tribunal and the Court of Appeal. It is only to be expected that the Government should do all that can be done, below the surface, to save a young man who comes of a great family, and has the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse for friend. So I think that we shall have a 'sensation at Landernau.'"

"How you go on, madame!" the President said sternly. "Can you suppose that the Court of First Instance will be influenced by considerations which have nothing to do with justice?"

"The event proves the contrary," she said meaningly, looking full at Sauvager and the President, who glanced coldly at her.

"Explain yourself, madame," said Sauvager. "You speak as if we had not done our duty."

"Mme. Camusot meant nothing," interposed her husband.

"But has not M. le Président just said something prejudicing a case which depends on the examination of the prisoner?" said she. "And the evidence is still to be taken, and the Court has not given its decision?"

"We are not at the law-courts," the deputy public prosecutor replied tartly; "and besides, we know all that."

"But the public prosecutor knows nothing at all about it yet," returned she, with an ironical glance. "He will come back from the Chamber of Deputies in all haste. You have cut out his work for him, and he, no doubt, will speak for himself."

The deputy prosecutor knitted his thick bushy brows. Those interested read tardy scruples in his countenance. A great silence followed, broken by no sound but the dealing of the cards. M. and Mme. Camusot, sensible of a decided chill in the atmosphere, took their departure to leave the conspirators to talk at their ease.

"Camusot," the lady began in the street, "you went too far. Why lead those people to suspect that you will have no part in their schemes? They will play you some ugly trick."

"What can they do? I am the only examining magistrate."

"Cannot they slander you in whispers, and procure your dismissal?"

At that very moment Chesnel ran up against the couple. The old notary recognized the examining magistrate; and with the lucidity which comes of an experience of business, he saw that the fate of the d'Esgrignons lay in the hands of the young man before him.

"Ah, sir!" he exclaimed, "we shall soon need you badly. Just a word with you.—Your pardon, madame," he added, as he drew Camusot aside.

Mme. Camusot, as a good conspirator, looked towards du Croisier's house, ready to break up the conversation if anybody appeared; but she thought, and thought rightly, that their enemies were busy discussing this unexpected turn which she had given to the affair. Chesnel meanwhile drew the magistrate into a dark corner under the wall, and lowered his voice for his companion's ear.

"If you are for the house of d'Esgrignon," he said, "Mme. la Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, the Prince de Cadignan, the Ducs de Navarreins and de Lenoncourt, the Keeper of the Seals, the Chancellor, the King himself, will interest themselves in you. I have just come from Paris; I knew all about this; I went post-haste to explain everything at Court. We are counting on you, and I will keep your secret. If you are hostile, I shall go back to Paris to-morrow and lodge a complaint with the Keeper of the Seals that there is a suspicion of corruption. Several functionaries were at du Croisier's house to-night, and no doubt, ate and drank there, contrary to law; and besides, they are friends of his."

Chesnel would have brought the Almighty to intervene if he had had the power. He did not wait for an answer; he left

Camusot and fled like a deer towards du Croisier's house. Camusot, meanwhile, bidden to reveal the notary's confidences, was at once assailed with, "Was I not right, dear?" —a wifely formula used on all occasions, but rather more vehemently when the fair speaker is in the wrong. By the time they reached home, Camusot had admitted the superiority of his partner in life, and appreciated his good fortune in belonging to her; which confession, doubtless, was the prelude of a blissful night.

Chesnel met his foes in a body as they left du Croisier's house, and began to fear that du Croisier had gone to bed. In his position he was compelled to act quickly, and any delay was a misfortune.

"In the King's name!" he cried, as the man-servant was closing the hall door. He had just brought the King on the scene for the benefit of an ambitious little official, and the word was still on his lips. He fretted and chafed while the door was unbarred; then, swift as a thunderbolt, dashed into the ante-chamber, and spoke to the servant

"A hundred crowns to you, young man, if you can wake Mme. du Croisier and send her to me this instant. Tell her anything you like."

Chesnel grew cool and composed as he opened the door of the brightly lighted drawing-room, where du Croisier was striding up and down. For a moment the two men scanned each other, with hatred and enmity, twenty years' deep, in their eyes. One of the two had his foot on the heart of the house of d'Esgrignon; the other, with a lion's strength, came forward to pluck it away.

"Your humble servant, sir," said Chesnel. "Have you made the charge?"

"Yes, sir."

"When was it made?"

"Yesterday."

"Have any steps been taken since the warrant of arrest was issued?"

"I believe so."

"I have come to treat with you."

"Justice must take its course, nothing can stop it, the arrest has been made."

"Never mind that, I am at your orders, at your feet." The old man knelt before du Croisier, and stretched out his hands entreatingly.

"What do you want? Our lands, our castle? Take all; withdraw the charge; leave us nothing but life and honor. And over and besides all this, I will be your servant; command and I will obey."

Du Croisier sat down in an easy-chair and left the old man to kneel.

"You are not vindictive," pleaded Chesnel; "you are good-hearted, you do not bear us such a grudge that you will not listen to terms. Before daylight the young man ought to be at liberty."

"The whole town knows that he has been arrested," returned du Croisier, enjoying his revenge.

"It is a great misfortune, but as there will neither be proofs nor trial, we can easily manage that."

Du Croisier reflected. He seemed to be struggling with self-interest; Chesnel thought that he had gained a hold on his enemy through the great motive of human action. At that supreme moment Mme. du Croisier appeared.

"Come here and help me to soften your dear husband, madame?" said Chesnel, still on his knees. Mme. du Croisier made him rise with every sign of profound astonishment. Chesnel explained his errand; and when she knew it, the generous daughter of the intendants of the Ducs de Alençon turned to du Croisier with tears in her eyes.

"Ah! monsieur, can you hesitate? The d'Esgrignons, the honor of the province!" she said.

"There is more in it than that," exclaimed du Croisier, rising to begin his restless walk again.

"More? What more?" asked Chesnel in amazement.

"France is involved, M. Chesnel! It is a question of the country, of the people, of giving my lords your nobles a

lesson, and teaching them that there is such a thing as justice, and law, and a bourgeoisie—a lesser nobility as good as they, and a match for them! There shall be no more trampling down half a score of wheat fields for a single hare; no bringing shame on families by seducing unprotected girls; they shall not look down on others as good as they are, and mock at them for ten whole years, without finding out at last that these things swell into avalanches, and those avalanches will fall and crush and bury my lords the nobles. You want to go back to the old order of things. You want to tear up the social compact, the Charter in which our rights are set forth——"

"And so?"

"Is it not a sacred mission to open the people's eyes?" cried du Croisier. "Their eyes will be opened to the morality of your party when they see nobles going to be tried at the Assize Court like Pierre and Jacques. They will say, then, that small folk who keep their self-respect are as good as great folk that bring shame on themselves. The Assize Court is a light for all the world. Here, I am the champion of the people, the friend of law. You yourselves twice flung me on the side of the people—once when you refused an alliance, twice when you put me under the ban of your society. You are reaping as you have sown."

If Chesnel was startled by this outburst, so no less was Mme. du Croisier. To her this was a terrible revelation of her husband's character, a new light not merely on the past but on the future as well. Any capitulation on the part of the colossus was apparently out of the question; but Chesnel in no wise retreated before the impossible.

"What, monsieur?" said Mme. du Croisier. "Would you not forgive? Then you are not a Christian."

"I forgive as God forgives, madame, on certain conditions."

"And what are they?" asked Chesnel, thinking that he saw a ray of hope.

"The elections are coming on; I want the votes at your disposal."

"You shall have them."

"I wish that we, my wife and I, should be received familiarly every evening, with an appearance of friendliness at any rate, my M. le Marquis d'Esgrignon and his circle," continued du Croisier.

"I do not know how we are going to compass it, but you shall be received."

"I wish to have the family bound over by a surety of four hundred thousand francs, and by a written document stating the nature of the compromise, so as to keep a loaded cannon pointed at its heart."

"We agree," said Chesnel, without admitting that the three hundred thousand francs was in his possession; "but the amount must be deposited with a third party and returned to the family after your election and repayment."

"No; after the marriage of my grand-niece, Mlle. Duval. She will very likely have four million francs some day; the reversion of our property (mine and my wife's) shall be settled upon her by her marriage-contract, and you shall arrange a match between her and the young Count."

"Never!"

"*Never!*" repeated du Croisier, quite intoxicated with triumph. "Good-night!"

"Idiot that I am," thought Chesnel, "why did I shrink from a lie to such a man?"

Du Croisier took himself off; he was pleased with himself; he had enjoyed Chesnel's humiliation; he had held the destinies of a proud house, the representatives of the aristocracy of the province, suspended in his hand; he had set the print of his heel on the very heart of the d'Esgrignons; and, finally, he had broken off the whole negotiation on the score of his wounded pride. He went up to his room, leaving his wife alone with Chesnel. In his intoxication, he saw his victory clear before him. He firmly believed that the three hundred thousand francs had been squandered; the d'Esgrignons must sell or mortgage all that they had to raise the money; the Assize Court was inevitable to his mind.

An affair of forgery can always be settled out of court in France if the missing amount is returned. The losers by the crime are usually well-to-do, and have no wish to blight an imprudent man's character. But du Croisier had no mind to slacken his hold until he knew what he was about. He meditated until he fell asleep on the magnificent manner in which his hopes would be fulfilled by way of the Assize Court or by marriage. The murmur of voices below, the lamentations of Chesnel and Mme. du Croisier, sounded sweet in his ears.

Mme. du Croisier shared Chesnel's views of the d'Esgrignons. She was a deeply religious woman, a Royalist attached to the noblesse; the interview had been in every way a cruel shock to her feelings. She, a staunch Royalist, had heard the roaring of that Liberalism, which, in her director's opinion, wished to crush the Church. The Left benches for her meant the popular upheaval and the scaffolds of 1793.

"What would your uncle, that sainted man who hears us, say to this?" exclaimed Chesnel. Mme. du Croisier made no reply, but the great tears rolled down her cheeks.

"You have already been the cause of one poor boy's death; his mother will go mourning all her days," continued Chesnel; he saw how his words told, but he would have struck harder and even broken this woman's heart to save Victurnien. "Do you want to kill Mlle. Armande, for she would not survive the dishonor of the house for a week? Do you wish to be the death of poor Chesnel, your old notary? For I shall kill the Count in prison before they shall bring the charge against him, and take my own life afterwards, before they shall try me for murder in an Assize Court."

"That is enough! that is enough, my friend! I would do anything to put a stop to such an affair; but I never knew M. du Croisier's real character until a few minutes ago. To you I can make the admission: there is nothing to be done."

"But what if there is?"

"I would give half the blood in my veins that it were so," said she, finishing her sentence by a wistful shake of the head.

As the First Consul, beaten on the field of Marengo till five o'clock in the evening, by six o'clock saw the tide of battle turned by Desaix's desperate attack and Kellermann's terrific charge, so Chesnel in the midst of defeat saw the beginnings of victory. No one but a Chesnel, an old notary, an ex-steward of the manor, old Maître Sorbier's junior clerk, in the sudden flash of lucidity which comes with despair, could rise thus, high as a Napoleon, nay, higher. This was not Marengo, it was Waterloo, and the Prussians had come up; Chesnel saw this, and was determined to beat them off the field.

"Madame," he said, "remember that I have been your man of business for twenty years; remember that if the d'Esgrignons mean the honor of the province, you represent the honor of the bourgeoisie; it rests with you, and you alone, to save the ancient house. Now, answer me; are you going to allow dishonor to fall on the shade of your dead uncle, on the d'Esgrignons, on poor Chesnel? Do you want to kill Mlle. Armande weeping yonder? Or do you wish to expiate wrongs done to others by a deed which will rejoice your ancestors, the intendants of the dukes of Alençon, and bring comfort to the soul of our dear Abbé? If he could rise from his grave, he would command you to do this thing that I beg of you upon my knees."

"What is it?" asked Mme. du Croisier.

"Well. Here are the hundred thousand crowns," said Chesnel, drawing the bundles of notes from his pocket. "Take them, and there will be an end of it."

"If that is all," she began, "and if no harm can come of it to my husband——"

"Nothing but good," Chesnel replied. "You are saving him from eternal punishment in hell, at the cost of a slight disappointment here below."

"He will not be compromised, will he?" she asked, looking into Chesnel's face.

Then Chesnel read the depths of the poor wife's mind. Mme. du Croisier was hesitating between her two creeds; be-

tween wifely obedience to her husband as laid down by the Church, and obedience to the altar and the throne. Her husband, in her eyes, was acting wrongly, but she dared not blame him; she would fain save the d'Esgrignons, but she was loyal to her husband's interests.

"Not in the least," Chesnel answered; "your old notary swears it by the Holy Gospels——"

He had nothing left to lose for the d'Esgrignons but his soul; he risked it now by this horrible perjury, but Mme. du Croisier must be deceived, there was no other choice but death. Without losing a moment, he dictated a form of receipt by which Mme. du Croisier acknowledged payment of a hundred thousand crowns five days before the fatal letter of exchange appeared; for he recollected that du Croisier was away from home, superintending improvements on his wife's property at the time.

"Now swear to me that you will declare before the examining magistrate that you received the money on that date," he said, when Mme. du Croisier had taken the notes and he held the receipt in his hand.

"It will be a lie, will it not?"

"Venial sin," said Chesnel.

"I could not do it without consulting my director, M. l'Abbé Couturier."

"Very well," said Chesnel, "will you be guided entirely by his advice in this affair?"

"I promise that."

"And you must not give the money to M. du Croisier until you have been before the magistrate."

"No. Ah! God give me strength to appear in a Court of Justice and maintain a lie before men!"

Chesnel kissed Mme. du Croisier's hand, then stood upright, and majestic as one of the prophets that Raphael painted in the Vatican.

"Your uncle's soul is thrilled with joy," he said; "you have wiped out for ever the wrong that you did by marrying an enemy of altar and throne"—words that made a lively impression on Mme. du Croisier's timorous mind.

Then Chesnel all at once bethought himself that he must make sure of the lady's director, the Abbé Couturier. He knew how obstinately devout souls can work for the triumph of their views when once they come forward for their side, and wished to secure the concurrence of the Church as early as possible. So he went to the Hotel d'Esgrignon, roused up Mlle. Armande, gave her an account of that night's work, and sped her to fetch the Bishop himself into the forefront of the battle.

"Ah, God in heaven! Thou must save the house of d'Esgrignon!" he exclaimed, as he went slowly home again. "The affair is developing now into a fight in a Court of Law. We are face to face with men that have passions and interests of their own; we can get anything out of them. This du Croisier has taken advantage of the public prosecutor's absence; the public prosecutor is devoted to us, but since the opening of the Chambers he has gone to Paris. Now, what can they have done to get round his deputy? They have induced him to take up the charge without consulting his chief. This mystery must be looked into, and the ground surveyed to-morrow; and then, perhaps, when I have unraveled this web of theirs, I will go back to Paris to set great powers at work through Mme. de Maufrigneuse."

So he reasoned, poor, aged, clear-sighted wrestler, before he lay down half dead with bearing the weight of so much emotion and fatigue. And yet, before he fell asleep he ran a searching eye over the list of magistrates, taking all their secret ambitions into account, casting about for ways of influencing them, calculating his chances in the coming struggle. Chesnel's prolonged scrutiny of consciences, given in a condensed form, will perhaps serve as a picture of the judicial world in a country town.

Magistrates and officials generally are obliged to begin their career in the provinces; judicial ambition there ferments. At the outset every man looks towards Paris; they all aspire to shine in the vast theatre where great political causes come before the courts, and the higher branches of the legal pro-

fession are closely connected with the palpitating interests of society. But few are called to that paradise of the man of law, and nine-tenths of the profession are bound sooner or later to regard themselves as shelved for good in the provinces. Wherefore, every Tribunal of First Instance and every Court-Royal is sharply divided in two. The first section has given up hope, and is either torpid or content; content with the excessive respect paid to office in a country town, or torpid with tranquillity. The second section is made up of the younger sort, in whom the desire of success is untempered as yet by disappointment, and of the really clever men urged on continually by ambition as with a goad; and these two are possessed with a sort of fanatical belief in their order.

At this time the younger men were full of Royalist zeal against the enemies of the Bourbons. The most insignificant deputy official was dreaming of conducting a prosecution, and praying with all his might for one of those political cases which bring a man's zeal into prominence, draw the attention of the higher powers, and mean advancement for King's men. Was there a member of an official staff of prosecuting counsel who could hear of a Bonapartist conspiracy breaking out somewhere else without a feeling of envy? Where was the man that did not burn to discover a Caron, or a Berton, or a revolt of some sort? With reasons of State, and the necessity of diffusing the monarchical spirit throughout France as their basis, and a fierce ambition stirred up whenever party spirit ran high, these ardent politicians on their promotion were lucid, clear-sighted, and perspicacious. They kept up a vigorous detective system throughout the kingdom; they did the work of spies, and urged the nation along a path of obedience, from which it had no business to swerve.

Justice, thus informed with monarchical enthusiasm, atoned for the errors of the ancient parliaments, and walked, perhaps, too ostentatiously hand in hand with religion There was more zeal than discretion shown; but justice sinned not so much in the direction of machiavelism as by giving too candid expression to its views, when those views appeared to

be opposed to the general interests of a country which must be put safely out of reach of revolutions. But taken as a whole, there was still too much of the bourgeois element in the administration; it was too readily moved by petty Liberal agitation; and as a result, it was inevitable that it should incline sooner or later to the Constitutional party, and join ranks with the bourgeoisie in the day of battle. In the great body of legal functionaries, as in other departments of the administration, there was not wanting a certain hypocrisy, or rather that spirit of imitation which always leads France to model herself on the Court, and, quite unintentionally, to deceive the powers that be.

Officials of both complexions were to be found in the court in which young d'Esgrignon's fate depended. M. le Président du Ronceret and an elderly judge, Blondet by name, represented the section of functionaries shelved for good, and resigned to stay where they were; while the young and ambitious party comprised the examining magistrate M. Camusot, and his deputy M. Michu, appointed through the interests of the Cinq-Cygnes, and certain of promotion to the Court of Appeal of Paris at the first opportunity.

President du Ronceret held a permanent post; it was impossible to turn him out. The aristocratic party declined to give him what he considered to be his due, socially speaking; so he declared for the bourgeoisie, glossed over his disappointment with the name of independence, and failed to realize that his opinions condemned him to remain a president of a court of first instance for the rest of his life. Once started in this track the sequence of events led du Ronceret to place his hopes of advancement on the triumph of du Croisier and the Left. He was in no better odor at the Prefecture than at the Court-Royal. He was compelled to keep on good terms with the authorities; the Liberals distrusted him, consequently he belonged to neither party. He was obliged to resign his chances of election to du Croisier, he exercised no influence, and played a secondary part. The false position reacted on his character; he was soured and discontented; he was tired of political ambiguity, and privately

had made up his mind to come forward openly as leader of the Liberal party, and so to strike ahead of du Croisier. His behavior in the d'Esgrignon affair was the first step in this direction. To begin with, he was an admirable representative of that section of the middle classes which allows its petty passions to obscure the wider interests of the country; a class of crotchety politicians, upholding the government one day and opposing it the next, compromising every cause and helping none; helpless after they have done the mischief till they set about brewing more; unwilling to face their own incompetence, thwarting authority while professing to serve it. With a compound of arrogance and humility they demand of the people more submission than kings expect, and fret their souls because those above them are not brought down to their level, as if greatness could be little, as if power existed without force.

President du Ronceret was a tall, spare man with a receding forehead and scanty, auburn hair. He was wall-eyed, his complexion was blotched, his lips thin and hard, his scarcely audible voice came out like the husky wheezings of asthma. He had for a wife a great, solemn, clumsy creature, tricked out in the most ridiculous fashion, and outrageously overdressed. Mme. la Présidente gave herself the airs of a queen; she wore vivid colors, and always appeared at balls adorned with the turban, dear to the British female, and lovingly cultivated in out-of-the-way districts in France. Each of the pair had an income of four or five thousand francs, which, with the President's salary, reached a total of some twelve thousand. In spite of a decided tendency to parsimony, vanity required that they should receive one evening in the week. Du Croisier might import modern luxury into the town, M. and Mme. du Ronceret were faithful to the old traditions. They had always lived in the old-fashioned house belonging to Mme. du Ronceret, and had made no changes in it since their marriage. The house stood between a garden and a courtyard. The gray old gable end, with one window in each story, gave upon the road. High walls enclosed the

garden and the yard, but the space taken up beneath them in the garden by a walk shaded with chestnut trees was filled in the yard by a row of outbuildings. An old rust-devoured iron gate in the garden wall balanced the yard gateway, a huge, double-leaved carriage entrance with a buttress on either side, and a mighty shell on the top. The same shell was repeated over the house-door.

The whole place was gloomy, close, and airless. The row of iron-grated openings in the opposite wall, as you entered, reminded you of prison windows. Every passer-by could look in through the railings to see how the garden grew; the flowers in the little square borders never seemed to thrive there.

The drawing-room on the ground floor was lighted by a single window on the side of the street, and a French window above a flight of steps, which gave upon the garden. The dining-room on the other side of the great ante-chamber, with its windows also looking out into the garden, was exactly the same size as the drawing-room, and all three apartments were in harmony with the general air of gloom. It wearied your eyes to look at the ceilings all divided up by huge painted crossbeams and adorned with a feeble lozenge pattern or a rosette in the middle. The paint was old, startling in tint, and begrimed with smoke. The sun had faded the heavy silk curtains in the drawing-room; the old-fashioned Beauvais tapestry which covered the white-painted furniture had lost all its color with wear. A Louis Quinze clock on the chimney-piece stood between two extravagant, branched sconces filled with yellow wax candles, which the Présidente only lighted on occasions when the old-fashioned rock-crystal chandelier emerged from its green wrapper. Three card-tables, covered with threadbare baize, and a backgammon box, sufficed for the recreations of the company; and Mme. du Ronceret treated them to such refreshments as cider, chestnuts, pastry puffs, glasses of *eau sucrée,* and home-made orgeat. For some time past she had made a practice of giving a party once a fortnight, when tea and some pitiable attempts at pastry appeared to grace the occasion.

Once a quarter the du Roncerets gave a grand three-course dinner, which made a great sensation in the town, a dinner served up in execrable ware, but prepared with the science for which the provincial cook is remarkable. It was a Gargantuan repast, which lasted for six whole hours, and by abundance the President tried to vie with du Croisier's elegance.

And so du Ronceret's life and its accessories were just what might have been expected from his character and his false position. He felt dissatisfied at home without precisely knowing what was the matter; but he dared not go to any expense to change existing conditions, and was only too glad to put by seven or eight thousand francs every year, so as to leave his son Fabien a handsome private fortune. Fabien du Ronceret had no mind for the magistracy, the bar, or the civil service, and his pronounced turn for doing nothing drove his parent to despair.

On this head there was rivalry between the President and the Vice-President, old M. Blondet. M. Blondet, for a long time past, had been sedulously cultivating an acquaintance between his son and the Blandureau family. The Blandureaus were well-to-do linen manufacturers, with an only daughter, and it was on this daughter that the President had fixed his choice of a wife for Fabien. Now, Joseph Blondet's marriage with Mlle. Blandureau depended on his nomination to the post which his father, old Blondet, hoped to obtain for him when he himself should retire. But President du Ronceret, in underhand ways, was thwarting the old man's plans, and working indirectly upon the Blandureaus. Indeed, if it had not been for this affair of young d'Esgrignon's, the astute President might have cut them out, father and son, for their rivals were very much richer.

M. Blondet, the victim of the machiavelian President's intrigues, was one of the curious figures which lie buried away in the provinces like old coins in a crypt. He was at that time a man of sixty-seven or thereabouts, but he carried his years well; he was very tall, and in build reminded you of the canons of the good old times. The smallpox had riddled his

face with numberless dints, and spoilt the shape of his nose by imparting to it a gimlet-like twist; it was a countenance by no means lacking in character, very evenly tinted with a diffused red, lighted up by a pair of bright little eyes, with a sardonic look in them, while a certain sarcastic twitch of the purpled lips gave expression to that feature.

Before the Revolution broke out, Blondet senior had been a barrister; afterwards he became the public accuser, and one of the mildest of those formidable functionaries. Goodman Blondet, as they used to call him, deadened the force of the new doctrines by acquiescing in them all, and putting none of them in practice. He had been obliged to send one or two nobles to prison; but his further proceedings were marked with such deliberation, that he brought them through to the 9th Thermidor with a dexterity which won respect for him on all sides. As a matter of fact, Goodman Blondet ought to have been President of the Tribunal, but when the courts of law were reorganized he had been set aside; Napoleon's aversion for Republicans was apt to reappear in the smallest appointments under his government. The qualification of ex-public accuser, written in the margin of the list against Blondet's name, set the Emperor inquiring of Cambacérès whether there might not be some scion of an ancient parliamentary stock to appoint instead. The consequence was that du Ronceret, whose father had been a councillor of parliament, was nominated to the presidency; but, the Emperor's repugnance notwithstanding, Cambacérès allowed Blondet to remain on the bench, saying that the old barrister was one of the best jurisconsults in France.

Blondet's talents, his knowledge of the old law of the land and subsequent legislation, should by rights have brought him far in his profession; but he had this much in common with some few great spirits: he entertained a prodigious contempt for his own special knowledge, and reserved all his pretentions, leisure, and capacity for a second pursuit unconnected with the law. To this pursuit he gave his almost exclusive attention. The good man was passionately fond of

gardening. He was in correspondence with some of the most celebrated amateurs; it was his ambition to create new species; he took an interest in botanical discoveries, and lived, in short, in the world of flowers. Like all florists, he had a predilection for one particular plant; the *pelargonium* was his especial favorite. The court, the cases that came before it, and his outward life were as nothing to him compared with the inward life of fancies and abundant emotions which the old man led. He fell more and more in love with his flower-seraglio; and the pains which he bestowed on his garden, the sweet round of the labors of the months, held Goodman Blondet fast in his greenhouse. But for that hobby he would have been a deputy under the Empire, and shone conspicuous beyond a doubt in the Corps Legislatif.

His marriage was the second cause of his obscurity. As a man of forty, he was rash enough to marry a girl of eighteen, by whom he had a son named Joseph in the first year of their marriage. Three years afterwards Mme. Blondet, then the prettiest woman in the town, inspired in the prefect of the department a passion which ended only with her death. The prefect was the father of her second son Émile; the whole town knew this, old Blondet himself knew it. The wife who might have roused her husband's ambition, who might have won him away from his flowers, positively encouraged the judge in his botanical tastes. She no more cared to leave the place than the prefect cared to leave his prefecture so long as his mistress lived.

Blondet felt himself unequal at his age to a contest with a young wife. He sought consolation in his greenhouse, and engaged a very pretty servant-maid to assist him to tend his ever-changing bevy of beauties. So while the judge potted, pricked out, watered, layered, slipped, blended, and induced his flowers to break, Mme. Blondet spent his substance on the dress and finery in which she shone at the prefecture. One interest alone had power to draw her away from the tender care of a romantic affection which the town came to admire in the end; and this interest was Émile's education. The

child of love was a bright and pretty boy, while Joseph was no less heavy and plain-featured. The old judge, blinded by paternal affection, loved Joseph as his wife loved Émile.

For a dozen years M. Blondet bore his lot with perfect resignation. He shut his eyes to his wife's intrigue with a dignified, well-bred composure, quite in the style of an eighteenth century *grand seigneur;* but, like all men with a taste for a quiet life, he could cherish a profound dislike, and he hated his younger son. When his wife died, therefore, in 1818, he turned the intruder out of the house, and packed him off to Paris to study law on an allowance of twelve hundred francs for all resource, nor could any cry of distress extract another penny from his purse. Émile Blondet would have gone under if it had not been for his real father.

M. Blondet's house was one of the prettiest in the town. It stood almost opposite the prefecture, with a neat little court in front. A row of old-fashioned iron railings between two brickwork piers enclosed it from the street; and a low wall, also of brick, with a second row of railings along the top, connected the piers with the neighboring house. The little court, a space about ten fathoms in width by twenty in length, was cut in two by a brick pathway which ran from the gate to the house door between a border on either side. Those borders were always renewed; at every season of the year they exhibited a successful show of blossom, to the admiration of the public. All along the back of the garden-beds a quantity of climbing plants grew up and covered the walls of the neighboring houses with a magnificent mantle; the brickwork piers were hidden in clusters of honeysuckle; and, to crown all, in a couple of terra-cotta vases at the summit, a pair of acclimatized cactuses displayed to the astonished eyes of the ignorant those thick leaves bristling with spiny defences which seem to be due to some plant disease.

It was a plain-looking house, built of brick, with brickwork arches above the windows, and bright green Venetian shutters to make it gay. Through the glass door you could look straight across the house to the opposite glass door, at

the end of a long passage, and down the central alley in the garden beyond; while through the windows of the dining-room and drawing-room, which extended, like the passage, from back to front of the house, you could often catch further glimpses of the flower-beds in a garden of about two acres in extent. Seen from the road, the brick-work harmonized with the fresh flowers and shrubs, for two centuries had overlaid it with mosses and green and russet tints. No one could pass through the town without falling in love with a house with such charming surroundings, so covered with flowers and mosses to the roof-ridge, where two pigeons of glazed crockery ware were perched by way of ornament.

M. Blondet possessed an income of about four thousand livres derived from land, besides the old house in the town. He meant to avenge his wrongs legitimately enough. He would leave his house, his lands, his seat on the bench to his son Joseph, and the whole town knew what he meant to do. He had made a will in that son's favor; he had gone as far as the Code will permit a man to go in the way of disinheriting one child to benefit another; and what was more, he had been putting by money for the past fifteen years to enable his lout of a son to buy back from Émile that portion of his father's estate which could not legally be taken away from him.

Émile Blondet thus turned adrift had contrived to gain distinction in Paris, but so far it was rather a name than a practical result. Émile's indolence, recklessness, and happy-go-lucky ways drove his real father to despair; and when that father died, a half-ruined man, turned out of office by one of the political reactions so frequent under the Restoration, it was with a mind uneasy as to the future of a man endowed with the most brilliant qualities.

Émile Blondet found support in a friendship with a Mlle. de Troisville, whom he had known before her marriage with the Comte de Montcornet. His mother was living when the Troisvilles came back after the emigration; she was related to the family, distantly it is true, but the connection was

close enough to allow her to introduce Émile to the house. She, poor woman, foresaw the future. She knew that when she died her son would lose both mother and father, a thought which made death doubly bitter, so she tried to interest others in him. She encouraged the liking that sprang up between Émile and the eldest daughter of the house of Troisville; but while the liking was exceedingly strong on the young lady's part, a marriage was out of the question. It was a romance on the pattern of *Paul et Virginie.* Mme. Blondet did what she could to teach her son to look to the Troisvilles, to found a lasting attachment on a children's game of "make-believe" love, which was bound to end as boy-and-girl romances usually do. When Mlle. de Troisville's marriage with General Montcornet was announced, Mme. Blondet, a dying woman, went to the bride and solemnly implored her never to abandon Émile, and to use her influence for him in society in Paris, whither the General's fortune summoned her to shine.

Luckily for Émile, he was able to make his own way. He made his appearance, at the age of twenty, as one of the masters of modern literature; and met with no less success in the society into which he was launched by the father who at first could afford to bear the expense of the young man's extravagance. Perhaps Émile's precocious celebrity and the good figure that he made strengthened the bonds of his friendship with the Countess. Perhaps Mme. de Montcornet, with the Russian blood in her veins (her mother was the daughter of the Princess Scherbelloff), might have cast off the friend of her childhood if he had been a poor man struggling with all his might among the difficulties which beset a man of letters in Paris; but by the time that the real strain of Émile's adventurous life began, their attachment was unalterable on either side. He was looked upon as one of the leading lights of journalism when young d'Esgrignon met him at his first supper-party in Paris; his acknowledged position in the world of letters was very high, and he towered above his reputation. Goodman Blondet had not the faintest conception of the power which the Constitutional Government had given to the

press; nobody ventured to talk in his presence of the son of whom he refused to hear. And so it came to pass that he knew nothing of Émile whom he had cursed and Émile's greatness.

Old Blondet's integrity was as deeply rooted in him as his passion for flowers; he knew nothing but law and botany. He would have interviews with litigants, listen to them, chat with them, and show them his flowers; he would accept rare seeds from them; but once on the bench, no judge on earth was more impartial. Indeed, his manner of proceeding was so well known, that litigants never went near him except to hand over some document which might enlighten him in the performance of his duty, and nobody tried to throw dust in his eyes. With his learning, his lights, and his way of holding his real talents cheap, he was so indispensable to President du Ronceret, that, matrimonial schemes apart, that functionary would have done all that he could, in an underhand way, to prevent the vice-president from retiring in favor of his son. If the learned old man left the bench, the President would be utterly unable to do without him.

Goodman Blondet did not know that it was in Émile's power to fulfil all his wishes in a few hours. The simplicity of his life was worthy of one of Plutarch's men. In the evening he looked over his cases; next morning he worked among his flowers; and all day long he gave decisions on the bench. The pretty maid-servant, now of ripe age, and wrinkled like an Easter pippin, looked after the house, and they lived according to the established customs of the strictest parsimony. Mlle. Cadot always carried the keys of her cupboards and fruit-loft about with her. She was indefatigable. She went to market herself, she cooked and dusted and swept, and never missed mass of a morning. To give some idea of the domestic life of the household, it will be enough to remark that the father and son never ate fruit till it was beginning to spoil, because Mlle. Cadot always brought out anything that would not keep. No one in the house ever tasted the luxury of new

bread, and all the fast days in the calendar were punctually observed. The gardener was put on rations like a soldier; the elderly Valideh always kept an eye upon him. And she, for her part, was so deferentially treated, that she took her meals with the family, and in consequence was continually trotting to and fro between the kitchen and the parlor at breakfast and dinner time.

Mlle. Blandureau's parents had consented to her marriage with Joseph Blondet upon one condition—the penniless and briefless barrister must be an assistant judge. So, with the desire of fitting his son to fill the position, old M. Blondet racked his brains to hammer the law into his son's head by dint of lessons, so as to make a cut-and-dried lawyer of him. As for Blondet junior, he spent almost every evening at the Blandureaus' house, to which also young Fabien du Ronceret had been admitted since his return, without raising the slightest suspicion in the minds of father or son.

Everything in this life of theirs was measured with an accuracy worthy of Gerard Dow's *Money Changer;* not a grain of salt too much, not a single profit foregone; but the economical principles by which it was regulated were relaxed in favor of the greenhouse and garden. "The garden was the master's craze," Mlle. Cadot used to say The master's blind fondness for Joseph was not a craze in her eyes; she shared the father's predilection; she pampered Joseph; she darned his stockings; and would have been better pleased if the money spent on the garden had been put by for Joseph's benefit.

That garden was kept in marvelous order by a single man; the paths, covered with river-sand, continually turned over with the rake, meandered among the borders full of the rarest flowers. Here were all kinds of color and scent, here were lizards on the walls, legions of little flower-pots standing out in the sun, regiments of forks and hoes, and a host of innocent things, a combination of pleasant results to justify the gardener's charming hobby.

At the end of the greenhouse the judge had set up a grandstand, an amphitheatre of benches to hold some five or six

thousand pelargoniums in pots—a splendid and famous show. People came to see his geraniums in flower, not only from the neighborhood, but even from the departments round about. The Empress Marie Louise, passing through the town, had honored the curiously kept greenhouse with a visit; so much was she impressed with the sight, that she spoke of it to Napoleon, and the old judge received the Cross of the Legion of Honor. But as the learned gardener never mingled in society at all, and went nowhere except to the Blandureaus, he had no suspicion of the President's underhand manœuvres; and others who could see the President's intentions were far too much afraid of him to interfere or to warn the inoffensive Blondets.

As for Michu, that young man with his powerful connections gave much more thought to making himself agreeable to the women in the upper social circles to which he was introduced by the Cinq-Cygnes, than to the extremely simple business of a provincial Tribunal. With his independent means (he had an income of twelve thousand livres), he was courted by mothers of daughters, and led a frivolous life. He did just enough at the Tribunal to satisfy his conscience, much as a schoolboy does his exercises, saying ditto on all occasions, with a "Yes, dear President." But underneath the appearance of indifference lurked the unusual powers of the Paris law student who had distinguished himself as one of the staff of prosecuting counsel before he came to the provinces. He was accustomed to taking broad views of things; he could do rapidly what the President and Blondet could only do after much thinking, and very often solved knotty points for them. In delicate conjunctures the President and Vice-President took counsel with their junior, confided thorny questions to him, and never failed to wonder at the readiness with which he brought back a task in which old Blondet found nothing to criticise. Michu was sure of the influence of the most crabbed aristocrats, and he was young and rich; he lived, therefore, above the level of departmental intrigues and pettinesses. He was an indispensable man at picnics,

he frisked with young ladies and paid court to their mothers, he danced at balls, he gambled like a capitalist. In short, he played his part of young lawyer of fashion to admiration; without, at the same time, compromising his dignity, which he knew how to assert at the right moment like a man of spirit. He won golden opinions by the manner in which he threw himself into provincial ways, without criticising them; and for these reasons, every one endeavored to make his time of exile endurable.

The public prosecutor was a lawyer of the highest ability; he had taken the plunge into political life, and was one of the most distinguished speakers on the ministerialist benches. The President stood in awe of him; if he had not been away in Paris at the time, no steps would have been taken against Victurnien; his dexterity, his experience of business, would have prevented the whole affair. At that moment, however, he was in the Chamber of Deputies, and the President and du Croisier had taken advantage of his absence to weave their plot, calculating, with a certain ingenuity, that if once the law stepped in, and the matter was noised abroad, things would have gone too far to be remedied.

As a matter of fact, no staff of prosecuting counsel in any Tribunal, at that particular time, would have taken up a charge of forgery against the eldest son of one of the noblest houses in France without going into the case at great length, and a special reference, in all probability, to the Attorney-General. In such a case as this, the authorities and the Government would have tried endless ways of compromising and hushing up an affair which might send an imprudent young man to the hulks. They would very likely have done the same for a Liberal family in a prominent position, so long as the Liberals were not too openly hostile to the throne and the altar. So du Croisier's charge and the young Count's arrest had not been very easy to manage. The President and du Croisier had compassed their ends in the following manner.

M. Sauvager, a young Royalist barrister, had reached the

position of deputy public prosecutor by dint of subservience to the Ministry. In the absence of his chief he was head of the staff of counsel for prosecution, and, consequently, it fell to him to take up the charge made by du Croisier. Sauvager was a self-made man; he had nothing but his stipend; and for that reason the authorities reckoned upon some one who had everything to gain by devotion. The President now expoited the position. No sooner was the document with the alleged forgery in du Croisier's hands, than Mme. la Présidente du Ronceret, prompted by her spouse, had a long conversation with M. Sauvager. In the course of it she pointed out the uncertainties of a career in the *magistrature debout* compared with the *magistrature assise,* and the advantages of the bench over the bar; she showed how a freak on the part of some official, or a single false step, might ruin a man's career.

"If you are conscientious and give your conclusions against the powers that be, you are lost," continued she. "Now, at this moment, you might turn your position to account to make a fine match that would put you above unlucky chances for the rest of your life; you may marry a wife with fortune sufficient to land you on the bench, in the *magistrature assise.* There is a fine chance for you. M. du Croisier will never have any children; everybody knows why. His money, and his wife's as well, will go to his niece, Mlle. Duval. M. Duval is an ironmaster, his purse is tolerably filled, to begin with, and his father is still alive, and has a little property besides. The father and son have a million of francs between them; they will double it with du Croisier's help, for du Croisier has business connections among great capitalists and manufacturers in Paris. M. and Mme. Duval the younger would be certain to give their daughter to a suitor brought forward by du Croisier, for he is sure to leave two fortunes to his niece; and, in all probability, he will settle the reversion of his wife's property upon Mlle. Duval in the marriage-contract, for Mme. du Croisier has no kin. You know how du Croisier hates the d'Esgrignons. Do him a service, be his

man, take up this charge of forgery which he is going to make against young d'Esgrignon, and follow up the proceedings at once without consulting the public prosecutor at Paris. And, then, pray Heaven that the Ministry dismisses you for doing your office impartially, in spite of the powers that be; for if they do, your fortune is made! You will have a charming wife and thirty thousand francs a year with her, to say nothing of four millions of expectations in ten years' time."

In two evenings Sauvager was talked over. Both he and the President kept the affair a secret from old Blondet, from Michu, and from the second member of the staff of prosecuting counsel. Feeling sure of Blondet's impartiality on a question of fact, the President made certain of a majority without counting Camusot. And now Camusot's unexpected defection had thrown everything out. What the President wanted was a committal for trial before the public prosecutor got warning. How if Camusot or the second counsel for the prosecution should send word to Paris?

And here some portion of Camusot's private history may perhaps explain how it came to pass that Chesnel took it for granted that the examining magistrate would be on the d'Esgrignons' side, and how he had the boldness to tamper in the open street with that representative of justice.

Camusot's father, a well-known silk mercer in the Rue des Bourdonnais, was ambitious for the only son of his first marriage, and brought him up to the law. When Camusot junior took a wife, he gained with her the influence of an usher of the Royal cabinet, backstairs influence, it is true, but still sufficient, since it had brought him his first appointment as justice of the peace, and the second as examining magistrate. At the time of his marriage, his father only settled an income of six thousand francs upon him (the amount of his mother's fortune, which he could legally claim), and as Mlle. Thirion brought him no more than twenty thousand francs as her portion, the young couple knew the hardships of hidden poverty. The salary of a provincial justice of the peace does not exceed fifteen hundred francs, while an examining

magistrate's stipend is augmented by something like a thousand francs, because his position entails expenses and extra work. The post, therefore, is much coveted, though it is not permanent, and the work is heavy, and that was why Mme. Camusot had just scolded her husband for allowing the President to read his thoughts.

Marie Cécile Amélie Thirion, after three years of marriage, perceived the blessing of Heaven upon it in the regularity of two auspicious events—the births of a girl and a boy; but she prayed to be less blessed in future. A few more of such blessings would turn straitened means into distress. M. Camusot's father's money was not likely to come to them for a long time; and, rich as he was, he would scarcely leave more than eight or ten thousand francs a year to each of his children, four in number, for he had been married twice. And besides, by the time that all "expectations," as match-makers call them, were realized, would not the magistrate have children of his own to settle in life? Any one can imagine the situation for a little woman with plenty of sense and determination, and Mme. Camusot was such a woman. She did not refrain from meddling in matters judicial. She had far too strong a sense of the gravity of a false step in her husband's career.

She was the only child of an old servant of Louis XVIII., a valet who had followed his master in his wanderings in Italy, Courland, and England, till after the Restoration the King rewarded him with the one place that he could fill at Court, and made him usher by rotation to the royal cabinet. So in Amélie's home there had been, as it were, a sort of reflection of the Court. Thirion used to tell her about the lords, and ministers, and great men whom he announced and introduced and saw passing to and fro The girl, brought up at the gates of the Tuileries, had caught some tincture of the maxims practised there, and adopted the dogma of passive obedience to authority She had sagely judged that her husband, by ranging himself on the side of the d'Esgrignons, would find favor with Mme. la Duchesse de Maufrigneuse,

and with two powerful families on whose influence with the King the Sieur Thirion could depend at an opportune moment. Camusot might get an appointment at the first opportunity within the jurisdiction of Paris, and afterwards at Paris itself. That promotion, dreamed of and longed for at every moment, was certain to have a salary of six thousand francs attached to it, as well as the alleviation of living in her own father's house, or under the Camusots' roof, and all the advantages of a father's fortune on either side. If the adage, "Out of sight is out of mind," holds good of most women, it is particularly true where family feeling or royal or ministerial patronage is concerned. The personal attendants of kings prosper at all times; you take an interest in a man, be it only a man in livery, if you see him every day.

Mme. Camusot, regarding herself as a bird of passage, had taken a little house in the Rue du Cygne. Furnished lodgings there were none; the town was not enough of a thoroughfare, and the Camusots could not afford to live at an inn like M. Michu. So the fair Parisian had no choice for it but to take such furniture as she could find; and as she paid a very moderate rent, the house was remarkably ugly, albeit a certain quaintness of detail was not wanting. It was built against a neighboring house in such a fashion that the side, with only one window in each story, gave upon the street, and the front looked out upon a yard where rose-bushes and buckhorn were growing along the wall on either side. On the farther side, opposite the house, stood a shed, a roof over two brick arches. A little wicket-gate gave entrance into the gloomy place (made gloomier still by the great walnut-tree which grew in the yard), and a double flight of steps, with an elaborately-wrought but rust-eaten handrail, led to the house door. Inside the house there were two rooms on each floor. The dining-room occupied that part of the ground floor nearest the street, and the kitchen lay on the other side of a narrow passage almost wholly taken up by the wooden staircase. Of the two first-floor rooms, one did duty as the magistrate's study, the other as a bedroom, while the nursery and the

servants' bedroom stood above in the attics. There were no ceilings in the house; the cross-beams were simply white-washed and the spaces plastered over. Both rooms on the first floor and the dining-room below were wainscoted and adorned with the labyrinthine designs which taxed the patience of the eighteenth century joiner; but the carving had been painted a dingy gray most depressing to behold.

The magistrate's study looked as though it belonged to a provincial lawyer; it contained a big bureau, a mahogany armchair, a law student's books, and shabby belongings transported from Paris. Mme. Camusot's room was more of a native product; it boasted a blue-and-white scheme of decoration, a carpet, and that anomalous kind of furniture which appears to be in the fashion, while it is simply some style that has failed in Paris. As to the dining-room, it was nothing but an ordinary provincial dining-room, bare and chilly, with a damp, faded paper on the walls.

In this shabby room, with nothing to see but the walnut-tree, the dark leaves growing against the walls, and the almost deserted road beyond them, a somewhat lively and frivolous woman, accustomed to the amusements and stir of Paris, used to sit all day long, day after day, and for the most part of the time alone, though she received tiresome and inane visits which led her to think her loneliness preferable to empty tittle-tattle. If she permitted herself the slightest gleam of intelligence, it gave rise to interminable comment and embittered her condition. She occupied herself a great deal with her children, not so much from taste as for the sake of an interest in her almost solitary life, and exercised her mind on the only subjects which she could find—to wit, the intrigues which went on around her, the ways of provincials, and the ambitions shut in by their narrow horizons. So she very soon fathomed mysteries of which her husband had no idea. As she sat at her window with a piece of intermittent embroidery work in her fingers, she did not see her woodshed full of faggots nor the servant busy at the wash tub; she was looking out upon Paris, Paris where everything is pleasure, every-

thing is full of life. She dreamed of Paris gaieties, and shed tears because she must abide in this dull prison of a country town. She was disconsolate because she lived in a peaceful district, where no conspiracy, no great affair would ever occur. She saw herself doomed to sit under the shadow of the walnut-tree for some time to come.

Mme. Camusot was a little, plump, fresh, fair-haired woman, with a very prominent forehead, a mouth which receded, and a turned-up chin, a type of countenance which is passable in youth, but looks old before the time. Her bright, quick eyes expressed her innocent desire to get on in the world, and the envy born of her present inferior position, with rather too much candor; but still they lighted up her commonplace face and set if off with a certain energy of feeling, which success was certain to extinguish in later life. At that time she used to give a good deal of time and thought to her dresses, inventing trimmings and embroidering them; she planned out her costumes with the maid whom she had brought with her from Paris, and so maintained the reputation of Parisiennes in the provinces. Her caustic tongue was dreaded; she was not beloved. In that keen, investigating spirit peculiar to unoccupied women who are driven to find some occupation for empty days, she had pondered the President's private opinions, until at length she discovered what he meant to do, and for some time past she had advised Camusot to declare war. The young Count's affair was an excellent opportunity. Was it not obviously Camusot's part to make a stepping-stone of this criminal case by favoring the d'Esgrignons, a family with power of a very different kind from the power of the du Croisier party?

"Sauvager will never marry Mlle. Duval. They are dangling her before him, but he will be the dupe of those Machiavels in the Val-Noble to whom he is going to sacrifice his position. Camusot, this affair, so unfortunate as it is for the d'Esgrignons, so insidiously brought on by the President for du Croisier's benefit, will turn out well for nobody but *you,*" she had said, as they went in.

The shrewd Parisienne had likewise guessed the President's underhand manœuvres with the Blandureaus, and his object in baffling old Blondet's efforts, but she saw nothing to be gained by opening the eyes of father or son to the perils of the situation; she was enjoying the beginning of the comedy; she knew about the proposals made by Chesnel's successor on behalf of Fabien du Ronceret, but she did not suspect how important that secret might be to her. If she or her husband were threatened by the President, Mme. Camusot could threaten too, in her turn, to call the amateur gardener's attention to a scheme for carrying off the flower which he meant to transplant into his house.

Chesnel had not penetrated, like Mme. Camusot, into the means by which Sauvager had been won over; but by dint of looking into the various lives and interests of the men grouped about the Lilies of the Tribunal, he knew that he could count upon the public prosecutor, upon Camusot, and M. Michu. Two judges for the d'Esgrignons would paralyze the rest. And, finally, Chesnel knew old Blondet well enough to feel sure that if he ever swerved from impartiality, it would be for the sake of the work of his whole lifetime,—to secure his son's appointment. So Chesnel slept, full of confidence, on the resolve to go to M. Blondet and offer to realize his so long cherished hopes, while he opened his eyes to President du Ronceret's treachery. Blondet won over, he would take a peremptory tone with the examining magistrate, to whom he hoped to prove that if Victurnien was not blameless, he had been merely imprudent; the whole thing should be shown in the light of a boy's thoughtless escapade.

But Chesnel slept neither soundly nor for long. Before dawn he was awakened by his housekeeper. The most bewitching person in this history, the most adorable youth on the face of the globe, Mme. la Duchesse de Maufrigneuse herself, in man's attire, had driven alone from Paris in a calèche, and was waiting to see him.

"I have come to save him or to die with him," said she, addressing the notary, who thought that he was dreaming.

"I have brought a hundred thousand francs, given me by His Majesty out of his private purse, to buy Victurnien's innocence, if his adversary can be bribed. If we fail utterly, I have brought poison to snatch him away before anything takes place, before even the indictment is drawn up. But we shall not fail. I have sent word to the public prosecutor; he is on the road behind me; he could not travel in my calèche, because he wished to take the instructions of the Keeper of the Seals."

Chesnel rose to the occasion and played up to the Duchess; he wrapped himself in his dressing-gown, fell at her feet and kissed them, not without asking her pardon for forgetting himself in his joy.

"We are saved!" cried he; and gave orders to Brigitte to see that Mme. la Duchesse had all that she needed after traveling post all night. He appealed to the fair Diane's spirit, by making her see that it was absolutely necessary that she should visit the examining magistrate before daylight, lest any one should discover the secret, or so much as imagine that the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse had come.

"And have I not a passport in due form?" quoth she, displaying a sheet of paper, wherein she was described as M. le Vicomte Félix de Vandenesse, Master of Requests, and His Majesty's private secretary. "And do I not play my man's part well?" she added, running her fingers through her wig *à la Titus,* and twirling her riding switch.

"O! Mme. la Duchesse, you are an angel!" cried Chesnel, with tears in his eyes. (She was destined always to be an angel, even in man's attire.) "Button up your greatcoat, muffle yourself up to the eyes in your traveling cloak, take my arm, and let us go as quickly as possible to Camusot's house before anybody can meet us."

"Then am I going to see a man called Camusot?" she asked.

"With a nose to match his name,"* assented Chesnel.

The old notary felt his heart dead within him, but he

* *Camus,* flat-nosed

thought it none the less necessary to humor the Duchess, to laugh when she laughed, and shed tears when she wept; groaning in spirit, all the same, over the feminine frivolity which could find matter for a jest while setting about a matter so serious. What would he not have done to save the Count? While Chesnel dressed, Mme. de Maufrigneuse sipped the cup of coffee and cream which Brigitte brought her, and agreed with herself that provincial women cooks are superior to the Parisian *chefs,* who despise the little details which make all the difference to an epicure. Thanks to Chesnel's taste for delicate fare, Brigitte was found prepared to set an excellent meal before the Duchess.

Chesnel and his charming companion set out for M. and Mme. Camusot's house.

"Ah! so there is a Mme. Camusot?" said the Duchess. "Then the affair may be managed."

"And so much the more readily, because the lady is visibly tired enough of living among us provincials; she comes from Paris," said Chesnel.

"Then we must have no secrets from her?"

"You will judge how much to tell or to conceal," Chesnel replied humbly. "I am sure that she will be greatly flattered to be the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse's hostess; you will be obliged to stay in her house until nightfall, I expect, unless you find it inconvenient to remain."

"Is this Mme. Camusot a good-looking woman?" asked the Duchess, with a coxcomb's air.

"She is a bit of a queen in her own house."

"Then she is sure to meddle in court-house affairs," returned the Duchess. "Nowhere but in France, my dear M. Chesnel, do you see women so much wedded to their husbands that they are wedded to their husbands' professions, work, or business as well. In Italy, England, and Germany, women make it a point of honor to leave men to fight their own battles; they shut their eyes to their husbands' work as perseveringly as our French citizens' wives do all that in them lies to understand the position of their joint-stock partner-

ship; is not that what you call it in your legal language? Frenchwomen are so incredibly jealous in the conduct of their married life, that they insist on knowing everything; and that is how, in the least difficulty, you feel the wife's hand in the business; the Frenchwoman advises, guides, and warns her husband. And, truth to tell, the man is none the worse off. In England, if a married man is put in prison for debt for twenty-four hours, his wife will be jealous and make a scene when he comes back."

"Here we are, without meeting a soul on the way," said Chesnel. "You are the more sure of complete ascendency here, Mme. la Duchesse, since Mme. Camusot's father is one Thirion, usher of the royal cabinet."

"And the King never thought of that!" exclaimed the Duchess. "He thinks of nothing! Thirion introduced us, the Prince de Cadignan, M. de Vandenesse, and me! We shall have it all our own way in this house. Settle everything with M. Camusot while I talk to his wife."

The maid, who was washing and dressing the children, showed the visitors into the little fireless dining-room.

"Take that card to your mistress," said the Duchess, lowering her voice for the woman's ear; "nobody else is to see it. If you are discreet, child, you shall not lose by it."

At the sound of a woman's voice, and the sight of the handsome young man's face, the maid looked thunderstruck.

"Wake M. Camusot," said Chesnel, "and tell him, that I am waiting to see him on important business," and she departed upstairs forthwith.

A few minutes later Mme. Camusot, in her dressing-gown, sprang downstairs and brought the handsome stranger into her room. She had pushed Camusot out of bed and into his study with all his clothes, bidding him dress himself at once and wait there. The transformation scene had been brought about by a bit of pasteboard with the words MADAME LA DUCHESSE DE MAUFRIGNEUSE engraved upon it. A daughter of the usher of the royal cabinet took in the whole situation at once.

"Well!" exclaimed the maid-servant, left with Chesnel in the dining-room, "would not any one think that a thunderbolt had dropped in among us? The master is dressing in his study; you can go upstairs."

"Not a word of all this, mind," said Chesnel.

Now that he was conscious of the support of a great lady who had the King's consent (by word of mouth) to the measures about to be taken for rescuing the Comte d'Esgrignon, he spoke with an air of authority, which served his cause much better with Camusot than the humility with which he would otherwise have approached him.

"Sir," said he, "the words let fall last evening may have surprised you, but they are serious. The house of d'Esgrignon counts upon you for the proper conduct of investigations from which it must issue without a spot."

"I shall pass over anything in your remarks, sir, which must be offensive to me personally, and obnoxious to justice; for your position with regard to the d'Esgrignons excuses you up to a certain point, but——"

"Pardon me, sir, if I interrupt you," said Chesnel. "I have just spoken aloud the things which your superiors are thinking and dare not avow; though what those things are any intelligent man can guess, and you are an intelligent man.—Grant that the young man had acted imprudently, can you suppose that the sight of a d'Esgrignon dragged into an Assize Court can be gratifying to the King, the Court, or the Ministry? Is it to the interest of the kingdom, or of the country, that historic houses should fall? Is not the existence of a great aristocracy, consecrated by time, a guarantee of that Equality which is the catchword of the Opposition at this moment? Well and good; now not only has there not been the slightest imprudence, but we are innocent victims caught in a trap."

"I am curious to know how," said the examining magistrate.

"For the last two years, the Sieur du Croisier has regularly allowed M. le Comte d'Esgrignon to draw upon him for very

large sums," said Chesnel. "We are going to produce drafts for more than a hundred thousand crowns, which he continually met; the amounts being remitted by me—bear that well in mind—either before or after the bills fell due. M. le Comte d'Esgrignon is in a position to produce a receipt for the sum paid by him, before this bill, this alleged forgery, was drawn. Can you fail to see in that case that this charge is a piece of spite and party feeling? And a charge brought against the heir of a great house by one of the most dangerous enemies of the Throne and Altar, what is it but an odious slander? There has been no more forgery in this affair than there has been in my office. Summon Mme. du Croisier, who knows nothing as yet of the charge of forgery; she will declare to you that I brought the money and paid it over to her, so that in her husband's absence she might remit the amount for which he has not asked her. Examine du Croisier on the point; he will tell you that he knows nothing of my payment to Mme. du Croisier."

"You may make such assertions as these, sir, in M. d'Esgrignon's salon, or in any other house where people know nothing of business, and they may be believed; but no examining magistrate, unless he is a driveling idiot, can imagine that a woman like Mme. du Croisier, so submissive as she is to her husband, has a hundred thousand crowns lying in her desk at this moment, without saying a word to him; nor yet that an old notary would not have advised M. du Croisier of the deposit on his return to town."

"The old notary, sir, had gone to Paris to put a stop to the young man's extravagance."

"I have not yet examined the Comte d'Esgrignon," Camusot began; "his answers will point out my duty."

"Is he in close custody?"

"Yes."

"Sir," said Chesnel, seeing danger ahead, "the examination can be made in our interests or against them. But there are two courses open to you: you can establish the fact on Mme. du Croisier's deposition that the amount was deposited with her before the bill was drawn; or you can examine

the unfortunate young man implicated in this affair, and he in his confusion may remember nothing and commit himself. You will decide which is the more credible—a slip of memory on the part of a woman in her ignorance of business, or a forgery committed by a d'Esgrignon."

"All this is beside the point," began Camusot; "the question is, whether M. le Comte d'Esgrignon has or has not used the lower half of a letter addressed to him by du Croisier as a bill of exchange."

"Eh! and so he might," a voice cried suddenly, as Mme. Camusot broke in, followed by the handsome stranger, "so he might, when M. Chesnel had advanced the money to meet the bill——"

She leant over her husband.

"You will have the first vacant appointment as assistant judge at Paris, you are serving the King himself in this affair; I have proof of it; you will not be forgotten," she said, lowering her voice for his ear. "This young man that you see here is the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse; you must never have seen her, and do all that you can for the young Count boldly."

"Gentlemen," said Camusot, "even if the preliminary examination is conducted to prove the young Count's innocence, can I answer for the view the court may take? M. Chesnel, and you also, my sweet, know what M. le Président wants."

"Tut, tut, tut!" said Mme. Camusot, "go yourself to M. Michu this morning, and tell him that the Count has been arrested; you will be two against two in that case, I will be bound. *Michu* comes from Paris, and you know that he is devoted to the noblesse. Good blood cannot lie."

At that very moment Mlle. Cadot's voice was heard in the doorway. She had brought a note, and was waiting for an answer. Camusot went out, and came back again to read the note aloud:

"M. le Vice-Président begs M. Camusot to sit in audience to-day and for the next few days, so that there may be a quorum during M. le Président's absence."

"Then there is an end of the preliminary examination!" cried Mme. Camusot. "Did I not tell you, dear, that they would play you some ugly trick? The President has gone off to slander you to the public prosecutor and the President of the Court-Royal. You will be changed before you can make the examination. Is that clear?"

"You will stay, monsieur," said the Duchess. "The public prosecutor is coming, I hope, in time."

"When the public prosecutor arrives," little Mme. Camusot said, with some heat, "he must find all over.—Yes, my dear, yes," she added, looking full at her amazed husband.—"Ah! old hypocrite of a President, you are setting your wits against us; you shall remember it! You have a mind to help us to a dish of your own making, you shall have two served up to you by your humble servant Cécile Amélie Thirion!—Poor old Blondet! It is lucky for him that the President has taken this journey to turn us out, for now that great oaf of a Joseph Blondet will marry Mlle. Blandureau. I will let Father Blondet have some seeds in return.—As for you, Camusot, go to M. Michu's, while Mme. la Duchesse and I will go to find old Blondet. You must expect to hear it said all over the town to-morrow that I took a walk with a lover this morning."

Mme. Camusot took the Duchess' arm, and they went through the town by deserted streets to avoid any unpleasant adventure on the way to the old Vice-President's house. Chesnel meanwhile conferred with the young Count in prison; Camusot had arranged a stolen interview. Cook-maids, servants, and the other early risers of a country town, seeing Mme. Camusot and the Duchess taking their way through the back streets, took the young gentleman for an adorer from Paris. That evening, as Cécile Amélie had said, the news of her behavior was circulated about the town, and more than one scandalous rumor was occasioned thereby. Mme. Camusot and her supposed lover found old Blondet in his greenhouse. He greeted his colleague's wife and her companion, and gave the charming young man a keen, uneasy glance.

"I have the honor to introduce one of my husband's cousins," said Mme. Camusot, bringing forward the Duchess; "he is one of the most distinguished horticulturists in Paris; and as he cannot spend more than the one day with us, on his way back from Brittany, and has heard of your flowers and plants, I have taken the liberty of coming early."

"Oh, the gentleman is a horticulturist, is he?" said old Blondet.

The Duchess bowed.

"This is my coffee-plant," said Blondet, "and here is a tea-plant."

"What can have taken M. le Président away from home?" put in Mme. Camusot. "I will wager that his absence concerns M. Camusot."

"Exactly.—This, monsieur, is the queerest of all cactuses," he continued, producing a flower-pot which appeared to contain a piece of mildewed rattan; "it comes from Australia. You are very young, sir, to be a horticulturist."

"Dear M. Blondet, never mind your flowers," said Mme. Camusot. "*You* are concerned, you and your hopes, and your son's marriage with Mlle. Blandureau. You are duped by the President."

"Bah!" said old Blondet, with an incredulous air.

"Yes," retorted she. "If you cultivated people a little more and your flowers a little less, you would know that the dowry and the hopes that you have sown, and watered, and tilled, and weeded are on the point of being gathered now by cunning hands."

"Madame!——"

"Oh, nobody in the town will have the courage to fly in the President's face and warn you. I, however, do not belong to the town, and, thanks to this obliging young man, I shall soon be going back to Paris; so I can inform you that Chesnel's successor has made formal proposals for Mlle. Claire Blandureau's hand on behalf of young du Ronceret, who is to have fifty thousand crowns from his parents. As for Fabien, he has made up his mind to receive a call to the bar, so as to gain an appointment as judge."

Old Blondet dropped the flower-pot which he had brought out for the Duchess to see.

"Oh, my cactus! Oh, my son! and Mlle. Blandureau! . . . Look here! the cactus flower is broken to pieces."

"No," Mme. Camusot answered, laughing; "everything can be put right. If you have a mind to see your son a judge in another month, we will tell you how you must set to work——"

"Step this way, sir, and you will see my pelargoniums, an enchanting sight while they are in flower——" Then he added to Mme. Camusot, "Why did you speak of these matters while your cousin was present."

"All depends upon him," riposted Mme. Camusot. "Your son's appointment is lost for ever if you let fall a word about this young man."

"Bah!"

"The young man is a flower——"

"Ah!"

"He is the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, sent here by His Majesty to save young d'Esgrignon, whom they arrested yesterday on a charge of forgery brought against him by du Croisier. Mme. la Duchesse has authority from the Keeper of the Seals; he will ratify any promises that she makes to us——"

"My cactus is all right!" exclaimed Blondet, peering at his precious plant.—"Go on, I am listening."

"Take counsel with Camusot and Michu to hush up the affair as soon as possible, and your son will get the appointment. It will come in time enough to baffle du Ronceret's underhand dealings with the Blandureaus. Your son will be something better than assistant judge; he will have M. Camusot's post within the year. The public prosecutor will be here to-day. M. Sauvager will be obliged to resign, I expect, after his conduct in this affair. At the court my husband will show you documents which completely exonerate the Count and prove that the forgery was a trap of du Croisier's own setting."

Old Blondet went into the Olympic circus where his six thousand pelargoniums stood, and made his bow to the Duchess.

"Monsieur," said he, "if your wishes do not exceed the law, this thing may be done."

"Monsieur," returned the Duchess, "send in your resignation to M. Chesnel to-morrow, and I will promise you that your son shall be appointed within the week; but you must not resign until you have had confirmation of my promise from the public prosecutor. You men of law will come to a better understanding among yourselves. Only let him know that the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse has pledged her word to you. And not a word as to my journey hither," she added.

The old judge kissed her hand and began recklessly to gather his best flowers for her.

"Can you think of it? Give them to madame," said the Duchess. "A young man would not have flowers about him when he had a pretty woman on his arm."

"Before you go down to the court," added Mme. Camusot, "ask Chesnel's successor about those proposals that he made in the name of M. and Mme. du Ronceret."

Old Blondet, quite overcome by this revelation of the President's duplicity, stood planted on his feet by the wicket gate, looking after the two women as they hurried away through by-streets home again. The edifice raised so painfully during ten years for his beloved son was crumbling visibly before his eyes. Was it possible? He suspected some trick, and hurried away to Chesnel's successor.

At half-past nine, before the court was sitting, Vice-President Blondet, Camusot, and Michu met with remarkable punctuality in the council chamber. Blondet locked the door with some precautions when Camusot and Michu came in together.

"Well, Mr. Vice-President," began Michu, "M. Sauvager, without consulting the public prosecutor, has issued a warrant for the apprehension of one Comte d'Esgrignon, in order to

serve a grudge borne against him by one du Croisier, an enemy of the King's government. It is a regular topsy-turvy affair. The President, for his part, goes away, and thereby puts a stop to the preliminary examination! And we know nothing of the matter. Do they, by any chance, mean to force our hand?"

"This is the first word I have heard of it," said the Vice-President. He was furious with the President for stealing a march on him with the Blandureaus. Chesnel's successor, the du Roncerets' man, had just fallen into a snare set by the old judge; the truth was out, he knew the secret.

"It is lucky that we spoke to you about that matter, my dear master," said Camusot, "or you might have given up all hope of seating your son on the bench or of marrying him to Mlle. Blandureau."

"But it is no question of my son, nor of his marriage," said the Vice-President; "we are talking of young Comte d'Esgrignon. Is he or is he not guilty?"

"It seems that Chesnel deposited the amount to meet the bill with Mme. du Croisier," said Michu, "and a crime has been made of a mere irregularity. According to the charge, the Count made use of the lower half of a letter bearing du Croisier's signature as a draft which he cashed at the Kellers'."

"An imprudent thing to do," was Camusot's comment.

"But why is du Croisier proceeding against him if the amount was paid in beforehand?" asked Vice-President Blondet.

"He does not know that the money was deposited with his wife; or he pretends that he does not know," said Camusot.

"It is a piece of provincial spite," said Michu.

"Still it looks like a forgery to me," said old Blondet. No passion could obscure judicial clear-sightedness in him.

"Do you think so?" returned Camusot. "But, at the outset, supposing that the Count had no business to draw upon du Croisier, there would still be no forgery of the signature;

and the Count believed that he had a right to draw on Croisier when Chesnel advised him that the money had been placed to his credit."

"Well, then, where is the forgery?" asked Blondet. "It is the intent to defraud which constitutes forgery in a civil action."

"Oh, it is clear, if you take du Croisier's version for truth, that the signature was diverted from its purpose to obtain a sum of money in spite of du Croisier's contrary injunction to his bankers," Camusot answered.

"Gentlemen," said Blondet, "this seems to me to be a mere trifle, a quibble.—Suppose you had the money, I ought perhaps to have waited until I had your authorization; but I, Comte d'Esgrignon, was pressed for money, so I—— Come, come, your prosecution is a piece of revengeful spite. Forgery is defined by the law as an attempt to obtain any advantage which rightfully belongs to another. There is no forgery here, according to the letter of the Roman law, nor according to the spirit of modern jurisprudence (always from the point of view of a civil action, for we are not here concerned with the falsification of public or authentic documents). Between private individuals the essence of a forgery is the intent to defraud; where is it in this case? In what times are we living, gentlemen? Here is the President going away to balk a preliminary examination which ought to be over by this time! Until to-day I did not know M. le Président, but he shall have the benefit of arrears; from this time forth he shall draft his decisions himself. You must set about this affair with all possible speed, M. Camusot."

"Yes," said Michu. "In my opinion, instead of letting the young man out on bail, we ought to pull him out of this mess at once. Everything turns on the examination of du Croisier and his wife. You might summons them to appear while the court is sitting, M. Camusot; take down their depositions before four o'clock, send in your report to-night, and we will give our decision in the morning before the court sits."

"We will settle what course to pursue while the barristers

are pleading," said Vice-President Blondet, addressing Camusot.

And with that the three judges put on their robes and went into court.

At noon Mlle. Armande and the Bishop reached the Hôtel d'Esgrignon; Chesnel and M. Couturier were there to meet them. There was a sufficiently short conference between the prelate and Mme. du Croisier's director, and the latter set out at once to visit his charge.

At eleven o'clock that morning du Croisier received a summons to appear in the examining magistrate's office between one and two in the afternoon. Thither he betook himself, consumed by well-founded suspicions. It was impossible that the President should have foreseen the arrival of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse upon the scene, the return of the public prosecutor, and the hasty confabulation of his learned brethren; so he had omitted to trace out a plan for du Croisier's guidance in the event of the preliminary examination taking place. Neither of the pair imagined that the proceedings would be hurried on in this way. Du Croisier obeyed the summons at once; he wanted to know how M. Camusot was disposed to act. So he was compelled to answer the questions put to him. Camusot addressed him in summary fashion with the six following inquiries:—

"Was the signature on the bill alleged to be a forgery in your handwriting?—Had you previously done business with M. le Comte d'Esgrignon?—Was not M. le Comte d'Esgrignon in the habit of drawing upon you, with or without advice?—Did you not write a letter authorizing M. d'Esgrignon to rely upon you at any time?—Had not Chesnel squared the account not once, but many times already?—Were you not away from home when this took place?"

All these questions the banker answered in the affirmative. In spite of wordy explanations, the magistrate always brought him back to a "Yes" or "No." When the questions and answers alike had been resumed in the *procès-verbal,* the examining magistrate brought out a final thunderbolt.

"Was du Croisier aware that the money destined to meet the bill had been deposited with him, du Croisier, according to Chesnel's declaration, and a letter of advice sent by the said Chesnel to the Comte d'Esgrignon, five days before the date of the bill?"

That last question frightened du Croisier. He asked what was meant by it, and whether he was supposed to be the defendant and M. le Comte d'Esgrignon the plaintiff? He called the magistrate's attention to the fact that if the money had been deposited with him, there was no ground for the action.

"Justice is seeking information," said the magistrate, as he dismissed the witness, but not before he had taken down du Croisier's last observation.

"But the money, sir——"

"The money is at your house."

Chesnel, likewise summoned, came forward to explain the matter. The truth of his assertions was borne out by Mme. du Croisier's deposition. The Count had already been examined. Prompted by Chesnel, he produced du Croisier's first letter, in which he begged the Count to draw upon him without the insulting formality of depositing the amount beforehand. The Comte d'Esgrignon next brought out a letter in Chesnel's handwriting, by which the notary advised him of the deposit of a hundred thousand crowns with M. du Croisier. With such primary facts as these to bring forward as evidence, the young Count's innocence was bound to emerge triumphantly from a court of law.

Du Croisier went home from the court, his face white with rage, and the foam of repressed fury on his lips. His wife was sitting by the fireside in the drawing-room at work upon a pair of slippers for him. She trembled when she looked into his face, but her mind was made up.

"Madame," he stammered out, "what deposition is this that you made before the magistrate? You have dishonored, ruined, and betrayed me!"

"I have saved you, monsieur," answered she. "If some

day you will have the honor of connecting yourself with the d'Esgrignons by marrying your niece to the Count, it will be entirely owing to my conduct to-day."

"A miracle!" cried he. "Balaam's ass has spoken. Nothing will astonish me after this. And where are the hundred thousand crowns which (so M. Camusot tells me) are here in my house?"

"Here they are," said she, pulling out a bundle of bank-notes from beneath the cushions of her settee. "I have not committed mortal sin by declaring that M. Chesnel gave them into my keeping."

"While I was away?"

"You were not here."

"Will you swear that to me on your salvation?"

"I swear it," she said composedly.

"Then why did you say nothing to me about it?" demanded he.

"I was wrong there," said his wife, "but my mistake was all for your good. Your niece will be Marquise d'Esgrignon some of these days, and you will perhaps be a deputy, if you behave well in this deplorable business. You have gone too far; you must find out how to get back again."

Du Croisier, under stress of painful agitation, strode up and down his drawing-room; while his wife, in no less agitation, awaited the result of this exercise. Du Croisier at length rang the bell.

"I am not at home to any one to-night," he said, when the man appeared; "shut the gates; and if any one calls, tell them that your mistress and I have gone into the country. We shall start directly after dinner, and dinner must be half an hour earlier than usual."

The great news was discussed that evening in every drawing-room; little shopkeepers, working folk, beggars, the noblesse, the merchant class—the whole town, in short, was talking of the Comte d'Esgrignon's arrest on a charge of forgery. The Comte d'Esgrignon would be tried in the

Assize Court; he would be condemned and branded. Most of those who cared for the honor of the family denied the fact. At nightfall Chesnel went to Mme. Camusot and escorted the stranger to the Hôtel d'Esgrignon. Poor Mlle. Armande was expecting him; she led the fair Duchess to her own room, which she had given up to her, for his lordship the Bishop occupied Victurnien's chamber; and, left alone with her guest, the noble woman glanced at the Duchess with most piteous eyes.

"Your owed help, indeed, madame, to the poor boy who ruined himself for your sake," she said, "the boy to whom we are all of us sacrificing ourselves."

The Duchess had already made a woman's survey of Mlle. d'Esgrignon's room; the cold, bare, comfortless chamber, that might have been a nun's cell, was like a picture of the life of the heroic woman before her. The Duchess saw it all —past, present, and future—with rising emotion, felt the incongruity of her presence, and could not keep back the falling tears that made answer for her.

But in Mlle. Armande the Christian overcame Victurnien's aunt. "Ah, I was wrong; forgive me, Mme. la Duchesse; you did not know how poor we were, and my nephew was incapable of the admission. And besides, now that I see you, I can understand all—even the crime!"

And Mlle. Armande, withered and thin and white, but beautiful as those tall austere slender figures which German art alone can paint, had tears too in her eyes.

"Do not fear, dear angel," the Duchess said at last; "he is safe."

"Yes, but honor?—and his career? Chesnel told me; the King knows the truth."

"We will think of a way of repairing the evil," said the Duchess.

Mlle. Armande went downstairs to the salon, and found the Collection of Antiquities complete to a man. Every one of them had come, partly to do honor to the Bishop, partly to rally round the Marquis; but Chesnel, posted in the ante-

chamber, warned each new arrival to say no word of the affair, that the aged Marquis might never know that such a thing had been. The loyal Frank was quite capable of killing his son or du Croisier; for either the one or the other must have been guilty of death in his eyes. It chanced, strangely enough, that he talked more of Victurnien than usual; he was glad that his son had gone back to Paris. The King would give Victurnien a place before very long; the King was interesting himself at last in the d'Esgrignons. And his friends, their hearts dead within them, praised Victurnien's conduct to the skies. Mlle. Armande prepared the way for her nephew's sudden appearance among them by remarking to her brother that Victurnien would be sure to come to see them, and that he must be even then on his way.

"Bah!" said the Marquis, standing with his back to the hearth, "if he is doing well where he is, he ought to stay there, and not to be thinking of the joy it would give his old father to see him again. The King's service has the first claim."

Scarcely one of those present heard the words without a shudder. Justice might give over a d'Esgrignon to the executioner's branding iron. There was a dreadful pause. The old Marquise de Castéran could not keep back a tear that stole down over her rouge, and turned her head away to hide it.

Next day at noon, in the sunny weather, a whole excited population was dispersed in groups along the high street, which ran through the heart of the town, and nothing was talked of but the great affair. Was the Count in prison or was he not?—All at once the Comte d'Esgrignon's well-known tilbury was seen driving down the Rue Saint-Blaise; it had evidently come from the Prefecture, the Count himself was on the box seat, and by his side sat a charming young man, whom nobody recognized. The pair were laughing and talking and in great spirits. They wore Bengal roses in their buttonholes. Altogether, it was a theatrical surprise which words fail to describe.

At ten o'clock the court had decided to dismiss the charge, stating their very sufficient reasons for setting the Count at liberty, in a document which contained a thunderbolt for du Croisier, in the shape of an *inasmuch* that gave the Count the right to institute proceedings for libel. Old Chesnel was walking up the Grande Rue, as if by accident, telling all who cared to hear him that du Croisier had set the most shameful snares for the d'Esgrignons' honor, and that it was entirely owing to the forbearance and magnanimity of the family that he was not prosecuted for slander.

On the evening of that famous day, after the Marquis d'Esgrignon had gone to bed, the Count, Mlle. Armande, and the Chevalier were left with the handsome young page, now about to return to Paris. The charming cavalier's sex could not be hidden from the Chevalier, and he alone, besides the three officials and Mme. Camusot, knew that the Duchess had been among them.

"The house is saved," began Chesnel, "but after this shock it will take a hundred years to rise again. The debts must be paid now; you must marry an heiress, M. le Comte, there is nothing else left for you to do."

"And take her where you may find her," said the Duchess.

"A second *mésalliance!*" exclaimed Mlle. Armande.

The Duchess began to laugh.

"It is better to marry than to die," she said. As she spoke she drew from her waistcoat pocket a tiny crystal phial that came from the court apothecary.

Mlle. Armande shrank away in horror. Old Chesnel took the fair Maufrigneuse's hand, and kissed it without permission.

"Are you all out of your minds here?" continued the Duchess. "Do you really expect to live in the fifteenth century when the rest of the world has reached the nineteenth? My dear children, there is no noblesse nowadays; there is no aristocracy left! Napoleon's Code Civil made an end of the parchments, exactly as cannon made an end of feudal castles.

When you have some money, you will be very much more of nobles than you are now. Marry anybody you please, Victurnien, you will raise your wife to your rank; that is the most substantial privilege left to the French noblesse. Did not M. de Talleyrand marry Mme. Grandt without compromising his position? Remember that Louis XIV. took the Widow Scarron for his wife."

"He did not marry her for her money," interposed Mlle. Armande.

"If the Comtesse d'Esgrignon were one du Croisier's niece, for instance, would you receive her?" asked Chesnel.

"Perhaps," replied the Duchess; "but the King, beyond all doubt, would be very glad to see her.—So you do not know what is going on in the world?" continued she, seeing the amazement in their faces. "Victurnien has been in Paris; he knows how things go there. We had more influence under Napoleon. Marry Mlle. Duval, Victurnien; she will be just as much Marquise d'Esgrignon as I am Duchesse de Maufrigneuse."

"All is lost—even honor!" said the Chevalier, with a wave of the hand.

"Good-bye, Victurnien," said the Duchess, kissing her lover on the forehead; "we shall not see each other again. Live on your lands; that is the best thing for you to do; the air of Paris is not at all good for you."

"Diane!" the young Count cried despairingly.

"Monsieur, you forget yourself strangely," the Duchess retorted coolly, as she laid aside her rôle of man and mistress, and became not merely an angel again, but a duchess, and not only a duchess, but Molière's Célimène.

The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse made a stately bow to these four personages, and drew from the Chevalier his last tear of admiration at the service of *le beau sexe.*

"How like she is to the Princess Goritza!" he exclaimed in a low voice.

Diane had disappeared. The crack of the postilion's whip told Victurnien that the fair romance of his first love was

over. While the peril lasted, Diane could still see her lover in the young Count; but out of danger, she despised him for the weakling that he was.

Six months afterwards, Camusot received the appointment of assistant judge at Paris, and later he became an examining magistrate. Goodman Blondet was made a councillor to the Royal-Court; he held the post just long enough to secure a retiring pension, and then went back to live in his pretty little house. Joseph Blondet sat in his father's seat at the court till the end of his days; there was not the faintest chance of promotion for him, but he became Mlle. Blandureau's husband; and she, no doubt, is leading to-day, in the little flower-covered brick house, as dull a life as any carp in a marble basin. Michu and Camusot also received the Cross of the Legion of Honor, while Blondet became an Officer. As for M. Sauvager, deputy public prosecutor, he was sent to Corsica, to du Croisier's great relief; he had decidedly no mind to bestow his niece upon that functionary.

Du Croisier himself, urged by President du Ronceret, appealed from the finding of the Tribunal to the Court-Royal, and lost his cause. The Liberals throughout the department held that little d'Esgrignon was guilty; while the Royalists, on the other hand, told frightful stories of plots woven by "that abominable du Croisier" to compass his revenge. A duel was fought indeed; the hazard of arms favored du Croisier, the young Count was dangerously wounded, and his antagonist maintained his words. This affair embittered the strife between the two parties; the Liberals brought it forward on all occasions. Meanwhile du Croisier never could carry his election, and saw no hope of marrying his niece to the Count, especially after the duel.

A month after the decision of the Tribunal was confirmed in the Court-Royal, Chesnel died, exhausted by the dreadful strain, which had weakened and shaken him mentally and physically. He died in the hour of victory, like some old faithful hound that has brought the boar to bay, and gets

his death on the tusks. He died as happily as might be, seeing that he left the great House all but ruined, and the heir in penury, bored to death by an idle life, and without a hope of establishing himself. That bitter thought and his own exhaustion, no doubt, hastened the old man's end. One great comfort came to him as he lay amid the wreck of so many hopes, sinking under the burden of so many cares—the old Marquis, at his sister's entreaty, gave him back all the old friendship. The great lord came to the little house in the Rue du Bercail, and sat by his old servant's bedside, all unaware how much that servant had done and sacrificed for him. Chesnel sat upright, and repeated Simeon's cry.—The Marquis allowed them to bury Chesnel in the castle chapel; they laid him crosswise at the foot of the tomb which was waiting for the Marquis himself, the last, in a sense, of the d'Esgrignons.

And so died one of the last representatives of that great and beautiful thing, Service; giving to that often discredited word its original meaning, the relation between feudal lord and servitor. That relation, only to be found in some out-of-the-way province, or among a few old servants of the King, did honor alike to a noblesse that could call forth such affection, and to a bourgeoisie that could conceive it. Such noble and magnificent devotion is no longer possible among us. Noble houses have no servitors left; even as France has no longer a King, nor an hereditary peerage, nor lands that are bound irrevocably to an historic house, that the glorious names of a nation may be perpetuated. Chesnel was not merely one of the obscure great men of private life; he was something more—he was a great fact. In his sustained self-devotion is there not something indefinably solemn and sublime, something that rises above the one beneficent deed, or the heroic height which is reached by a moment's supreme effort? Chesnel's virtues belong essentially to the classes which stand between the poverty of the people on the one hand, and the greatness of the aristocracy on the other; for these can combine homely burgher virtues with the heroic ideals of the noble, enlightening both by a solid education.

Victurnien was not well looked upon at Court; there was no more chance of a great match for him, nor a place. His Majesty steadily refused to raise the d'Esgrignons to the peerage, the one royal favor which could rescue Victurnien from his wretched position. It was impossible that he should marry a bourgeoise heiress in his father's lifetime, so he was bound to live on shabbily under the paternal roof with memories of his two years of splendor in Paris, and the lost love of a great lady to bear him company. He grew moody and depressed, vegetating at home with a careworn aunt and a half heart-broken father, who attributed his son's condition to a wasting malady. Chesnel was no longer there.

The Marquis died in 1830. The great d'Esgrignon, with a following of all the less infirm noblesse from the Collection of Antiquities, went to wait upon Charles X. at Nonancourt; he paid his respects to his sovereign, and swelled the meagre train of the fallen king. It was an act of courage which seems simple enough to-day, but, in that time of enthusiastic revolt, it was heroism.

"The Gaul has conquered!" These were the Marquis' last words.

By that time du Croisier's victory was complete. The new Marquis d'Esgrignon accepted Mlle. Duval as his wife a week after his old father's death. His bride brought him three millions of francs, for du Croisier and his wife settled the reversion of their fortunes upon her in the marriage-contract. Du Croisier took occasion to say during the ceremony that the d'Esgrignon family was the most honorable of all the ancient houses in France.

Some day the present Marquis d'Esgrignon will have an income of more than a hundred thousand crowns. You may see him in Paris, for he comes to town every winter and leads a jolly bachelor life, while he treats his wife with something more than the indifference of the *grand seigneur* of olden times; he takes no thought whatever for her.

"As for Mlle. d'Esgrignon," said Émile Blondet, to whom all the detail of the story is due, "if she is no longer like the

divinely fair woman whom I saw by glimpses in my childhood, she is decidedly, at the age of sixty-seven, the most pathetic and interesting figure in the Collection of Antiquities. She queens it among them still. I saw her when I made my last journey to my native place in search of the necessary papers for my marriage. When my father knew who it was that I had married, he was struck dumb with amazement; he had not a word to say until I told him that I was a prefect.

"'You were born to it,' he said, with a smile.

"As I took a walk around the town, I met Mlle. Armande. She looked taller than ever. I looked at her, and thought of Marius among the ruins of Carthage. Had she not outlived her creed, and the beliefs that had been destroyed? She is a sad and silent woman, with nothing of her old beauty left except the eyes, that shine with an unearthly light. I watched her on her way to mass, with her book in her hand, and could not help thinking that she prayed to God to take her out of the world."

LES JARDIES, *July* 1837.

THE COMMISSION IN LUNACY

Dedicated to Monsieur le Contre-Amiral Bazoche, Governor of the Isle of Bourbon, by the grateful writer. DE BALZAC.

IN 1828, at about one o'clock one morning, two persons came out of a large house in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, near the Elysée-Bourbon. One was a famous doctor, Horace Bianchon; the other was one of the most elegant men in Paris, the Baron de Rastignac; they were friends of long standing. Each had sent away his carriage, and no cab was to be seen in the street; but the night was fine, and the pavement dry.

"We will walk as far as the boulevard," said Eugène de Rastignac to Bianchon. "You can get a hackney cab at the club; there is always one to be found there till daybreak. Come with me as far as my house."

"With pleasure."

"Well, and what have you to say about it?"

"About that woman?" said the doctor coldly.

"There I recognize my Bianchon!" exclaimed Rastignac.

"Why, how?"

"Well, my dear fellow, you speak of the Marquise d'Espard as if she were a case for your hospital."

"Do you want to know what I think, Eugène? If you throw over Madame de Nucingen for this Marquise, you will swap a one-eyed horse for a blind one."

"Madame de Nucingen is six-and-thirty, Bianchon."

"And this woman is three-and-thirty," said the doctor quickly.

"Her worst enemies only say six-and-twenty."

"My dear boy, when you really want to know a woman's age, look at her temples and the tip of her nose. Whatever women may achieve with their cosmetics, they can do nothing against those incorruptible witnesses to their experiences.

There each year of life has left its stigmata. When a woman's temples are flaccid, seamed, withered in a particular way; when at the tip of her nose you see those minute specks, which look like the imperceptible black smuts which are shed in London by the chimneys in which coal is burnt. . . . Your servant, sir! That woman is more than thirty. She may be handsome, witty, loving—whatever you please, but she is past thirty, she is arriving at maturity. I do not blame men who attach themselves to that kind of woman; only, a man of your superior distinction must not mistake a winter pippin for a little summer apple, smiling on the bough, and waiting for you to crunch it. Love never goes to study the registers of birth and marriage; no one loves a woman because she is handsome or ugly, stupid or clever; we love because we love."

"Well, for my part, I love for quite other reasons. She is Marquise d'Espard; she was a Blamont-Chauvry; she is the fashion; she has soul; her foot is as pretty as the Duchesse de Berri's; she has perhaps a hundred thousand francs a year—some day, perhaps, I may marry her! In short, she will put me into a position which will enable me to pay my debts."

"I thought you were rich," interrupted Bianchon.

"Bah! I have twenty thousand francs a year—just enough to keep up my stables. I was thoroughly done, my dear fellow, in that Nucingen business; I will tell you about that.—I have got my sisters married; that is the clearest profit I can show since we last met; and I would rather have them provided for than have five hundred thousand francs a year. Now, what would you have me do? I am ambitious. To what can Madame de Nucingen lead? A year more and I shall be shelved, stuck in a pigeon-hole like a married man. I have all the discomforts of marriage and of single life, without the advantages of either; a false position to which every man must come who remains tied too long to the same apron-string."

"So you think you will come upon a treasure here?" said

Bianchon. "Your Marquise, my dear fellow, does not hit my fancy at all."

"Your liberal opinions blur your eyesight. If Madame d'Espard were a Madame Rabourdin . . ."

"Listen to me. Noble or simple, she would still have no soul; she would still be a perfect type of selfishness. Take my word for it, medical men are accustomed to judge of people and things; the sharpest of us read the soul while we study the body. In spite of that pretty boudoir where we have spent this evening, in spite of the magnificence of the house, it is quite possible that Madame la Marquise is in debt."

"What makes you think so?"

"I do not assert it; I am supposing. She talked of her soul as Louis XVIII. used to talk of his heart. I tell you this: That fragile, fair woman, with her chestnut hair, who pities herself that she may be pitied, enjoys an iron constitution, an appetite like a wolf's, and the strength and cowardice of a tiger. Gauze, and silk, and muslin were never more cleverly twisted round a lie! *Ecco.*"

"Bianchon, you frighten me! You have learned a good many things, then, since we lived in the Maison Vauquer?"

"Yes; since then, my boy, I have seen puppets, both dolls and manikins. I know something of the ways of the fine ladies whose bodies we attend to, saving that which is dearest to them, their child—if they love it—or their pretty faces, which they always worship. A man spends his nights by their pillow, wearing himself to death to spare them the slightest loss of beauty in any part; he succeeds, he keeps their secret like the dead; they send to ask for his bill, and think it horribly exorbitant. Who saved them? Nature. Far from recommending him, they speak ill of him, fearing lest he should become the physician of their best friends.

"My dear fellow, those women of whom you say, 'They are angels!' I—I—have seen stripped of the little grimaces under which they hide their soul, as well as of the frippery under

which they disguise their defects—without manners and without stays; they are not beautiful.

"We saw a great deal of mud, a great deal of dirt, under the waters of the world when we were aground for a time on the shoals of the Maison Vauquer.—What we saw there was nothing. Since I have gone into higher society, I have seen monsters dressed in satin, Michonneaus in white gloves, Poirets bedizened with orders, fine gentlemen doing more usurious business than old Gobseck! To the shame of mankind, when I have wanted to shake hands with Virtue, I have found her shivering in a loft, persecuted by calumny, half-starving on an income or a salary of fifteen hundred francs a year, and regarded as crazy, or eccentric, or imbecile.

"In short, my dear boy, the Marquise is a woman of fashion, and I have a particular horror of that kind of woman. Do you want to know why? A woman who has a lofty soul, fine taste, gentle wit, a generously warm heart, and who lives a simple life, has not a chance of being the fashion. *Ergo:* A woman of fashion and a man in power are analogous; but there is this difference: the qualities by which a man raises himself above others ennoble him and are a glory to him; whereas the qualities by which a woman gains power for a day are hideous vices; she belies her nature to hide her character, and to live the militant life of the world she must have iron strength under a frail appearance.

"I, as a physician, know that a sound stomach excludes a good heart. Your woman of fashion feels nothing; her rage for pleasure has its source in a longing to heat up her cold nature, a craving for excitement and enjoyment, like an old man who stands night after night by the footlights at the opera. As she has more brain than heart, she sacrifices genuine passion and true friends to her triumph, as a general sends his most devoted subalterns to the front in order to win a battle. The woman of fashion ceases to be a woman; she is neither mother, nor wife, nor lover. She is, medically speaking, sex in the brain. And your Marquise, too, has all the characteristics of her monstrosity, the beak of a bird of

prey, the clear, cold eye, the gentle voice—she is as polished as the steel of a machine, she touches everything except the heart."

"There is some truth in what you say, Bianchon."

"Some truth?" replied Bianchon. "It is all true. Do you suppose that I was not struck to the heart by the insulting politeness by which she made me measure the imaginary distance which her noble birth sets between us? That I did not feel the deepest pity for her cat-like civilities when I remembered what her object was? A year hence she will not write one word to do me the slightest service, and this evening she pelted me with smiles, believing that I can influence my uncle Popinot, on whom the success of her case——"

"Would you rather she should have played the fool with you, my dear fellow?—I accept your diatribe against women of fashion; but you are beside the mark. I should always prefer for a wife a Marquise d'Espard to the most devout and devoted creature on earth. Marry an angel! you would have to go and bury your happiness in the depths of the country! The wife of a politician is a governing machine, a contrivance that makes compliments and courtesies. She is the most important and most faithful tool which an ambitious man can use; a friend, in short, who may compromise herself without mischief, and whom he may belie without harmful results. Fancy Mahomet in Paris in the nineteenth century! His wife would be a Rohan, a Duchesse de Chevreuse of the Fronde, as keen and as flattering as an Ambassadress, as wily as Figaro. Your loving wives lead nowhere; a woman of the world leads to everything; she is the diamond with which a man cuts every window when he has not the golden key which unlocks every door. Leave humdrum virtues to the humdrum, ambitious vices to the ambitious.

"Besides, my dear fellow, do you imagine that the love of a Duchesse de Langeais, or de Maufrigneuse, or of a Lady Dudley does not bestow immense pleasure? If only you knew how much value the cold, severe style of such women gives to the smallest evidence of their affection! What a delight

it is to see a periwinkle piercing through the snow! A smile from below a fan contradicts the reserve of an assumed attitude, and is worth all the unbridled tenderness of your middle-class women with their mortgaged devotion; for, in love, devotion is nearly akin to speculation.

"And, then, a woman of fashion, a Blamont-Chauvry, has her virtues too! Her virtues are fortune, power, effect, a certain contempt of all that is beneath her——"

"Thank you!" said Bianchon.

"Old curmudgeon!" said Rastignac, laughing. "Come—do not be common; do like your friend Desplein; be a Baron, a Knight of Saint-Michael; become a peer of France, and marry your daughters to dukes."

"I! May the five hundred thousand devils——"

"Come, come! Can you be superior only in medicine? Really, you distress me . . ."

"I hate that sort of people; I long for a revolution to deliver us from them for ever."

"And so, my dear Robespierre of the lancet, you will not go to-morrow to your uncle Popinot?"

"Yes, I will," said Bianchon; "for you I would go to hell to fetch water . . ."

"My good friend, you really touch me. I have sworn that a commission shall sit on the Marquis. Why, here is even a long-saved tear to thank you."

"But," Bianchon went on, "I do not promise to succeed as you wish with Jean-Jules Popinot. You do not know him. However, I will take him to see your Marquise the day after to-morrow; she may get round him if she can. I doubt it. If all the truffles, all the Duchesses, all the mistresses, and all the charmers in Paris were there in the full bloom of their beauty; if the King promised him the *prairie,* and the Almighty gave him the Order of Paradise with the revenues of Purgatory, not one of all these powers would induce him to transfer a single straw from one saucer of his scales into the other. He is a judge, as Death is Death."

The two friends had reached the office of the Minister for

Foreign Affairs, at the corner of the Boulevard des Capucines.

"Here you are at home," said Bianchon, laughing, as he pointed to the ministerial residence. "And here is my carriage," he added, calling a hackney cab. "And these—express our fortune."

"You will be happy at the bottom of the sea, while I am still struggling with the tempests on the surface, till I sink and go to ask you for a corner in your grotto, old fellow!"

"Till Saturday," replied Bianchon.

"Agreed," said Rastignac. "And you promise me Popinot?"

"I will do all my conscience will allow. Perhaps this appeal for a commission covers some little dramorama, to use a word of our good bad times."

"Poor Bianchon! he will never be anything but a good fellow," said Rastignac to himself as the cab drove off.

"Rastignac has given me the most difficult negotiation in the world," said Bianchon to himself, remembering, as he rose next morning, the delicate commission intrusted to him. "However, I have never asked the smallest service from my uncle in Court, and have paid more than a thousand visits gratis for him. And, after all, we are not apt to mince matters between ourselves. He will say Yes or No, and there an end."

After this little soliloquy the famous physician bent his steps, at seven in the morning, towards the Rue du Fouarre, where dwelt Monsieur Jean-Jules Popinot, judge of the Lower Court of the Department of the Seine. The Rue du Fouarre—an old word meaning straw—was in the thirteenth century the most important street in Paris. There stood the Schools of the University, where the voices of Abelard and of Gerson were heard in the world of learning. It is now one of the dirtiest streets of the Twelfth Arrondissement, the poorest quarter of Paris, that in which two-thirds of the population lack firing in winter, which leaves most brats at

the gate of the Foundling Hospital, which sends most beggars to the poorhouse, most rag-pickers to the street corners, most decrepit old folks to bask against the walls on which the sun shines, most delinquents to the police courts.

Half-way down this street, which is always damp, and where the gutter carries to the Seine the blackened waters from some dye-works, there is an old house, restored no doubt under Francis I., and built of bricks held together by a few courses of masonry. That it is substantial seems proved by the shape of its front wall, not uncommonly seen in some parts of Paris. It bellies, so to speak, in a manner caused by the protuberance of its first floor, crushed under the weight of the second and third, but upheld by the strong wall of the ground floor. At first sight it would seem as though the piers between the windows, though strengthened by the stone mullions, must give way; but the observer presently perceives that, as in the tower at Bologna, the old bricks and old time-eaten stones of this house persistently preserve their centre of gravity.

At every season of the year the solid piers of the ground floor have the yellow tone and the imperceptible sweating surface that moisture gives to stone. The passer-by feels chilled as he walks close to this wall, where worn corner-stones ineffectually shelter him from the wheels of vehicles. As is always the case in houses built before carriages were in use, the vault of the doorway forms a very low archway not unlike the barbican of a prison. To the right of this entrance there are three windows, protected outside by iron gratings of so close a pattern, that the curious cannot possibly see the use made of the dark, damp rooms within, and the panes too are dirty and dusty; to the left are two similar windows, one of which is sometimes open, exposing to view the porter, his wife, and his children; swarming, working, cooking, eating, and screaming, in a floored and wainscoted room where everything is dropping to pieces, and into which you descend two steps—a depth which seems to suggest the gradual elevation of the soil of Paris.

If on a rainy day some foot-passenger takes refuge under the long vault, with projecting lime-washed beams, which leads from the door to the staircase, he will hardly fail to pause and look at the picture presented by the interior of this house. To the left is a square garden-plot, allowing of not more than four long steps in each direction, a garden of black soil, with trellises bereft of vines, and where, in default of vegetation under the shade of two trees, papers collect, old rags, potsherds, bits of mortar fallen from the roof; a barren ground, where time has shed on the walls, and on the trunks and branches of the trees, a powdery deposit like cold soot. The two parts of the house, set at a right angle, derive light from this garden-court shut in by two adjoining houses built on wooden piers, decrepit and ready to fall, where on each floor some grotesque evidence is to be seen of the craft pursued by the lodger within. Here long poles are hung with immense skeins of dyed worsted put out to dry; there, on ropes, dance clean-washed shirts; higher up, on a shelf, volumes display their freshly marbled edges; women sing, husbands whistle, children shout; the carpenter saws his planks, a copper-turner makes the metal screech; all kinds of industries combine to produce a noise which the number of instruments renders distracting.

The general system of decoration in this passage, which is neither courtyard, garden, nor vaulted way, though a little of all, consists of wooden pillars resting on square stone blocks, and forming arches. Two archways open on to the little garden; two others, facing the front gateway, lead to a wooden staircase, with an iron balustrade that was once a miracle of smith's work, so whimsical are the shapes given to the metal; the worn steps creak under every tread. The entrance to each flat has an architrave dark with dirt, grease, and dust, and outer doors, covered with Utrecht velvet set with brass nails, once gilt, in a diamond pattern. These relics of splendor show that in the time of Louis XIV. the house was the residence of some Councillor to the Parlement, some rich priests, or some treasurer of the ecclesiastical revenue.

But these vestiges of former luxury bring a smile to the lips by the artless contrast of past and present.

M. Jean-Jules Popinot lived on the first floor of this house, where the gloom, natural to all first floors in Paris houses, was increased by the narrowness of the street. This old tenement was known to all the twelfth *arrondissement,* on which Providence had bestowed this lawyer, as it gives a beneficent plant to cure or alleviate every malady. Here is a sketch of a man whom the brilliant Marquise d'Espard hoped to fascinate.

M. Popinot, as is seemly for a magistrate, was always dressed in black—a style which contributed to make him ridiculous in the eyes of those who were in the habit of judging everything from a superficial examination. Men who are jealous of maintaining the dignity required by this color ought to devote themselves to constant and minute care of their person; but our dear M. Popinot was incapable of forcing himself to the puritanical cleanliness which black demands. His trousers, always threadbare, looked like camlet —the stuff of which attorneys' gowns are made; and his habitual stoop set them, in time, in such innumerable creases, that in places they were traced with lines, whitish, rusty, or shiny, betraying either sordid avarice, or the most unheeding poverty. His coarse worsted stockings were twisted anyhow in his ill-shaped shoes. His linen had the tawny tinge acquired by long sojourn in a wardrobe, showing that the late lamented Madame Popinot had had a mania for much linen; in the Flemish fashion, perhaps, she had given herself the trouble of a great wash no more than twice a year. The old man's coat and waistcoat were in harmony with his trousers, shoes, stockings, and linen. He always had the luck of his carelessness; for, the first day he put on a new coat, he unfailingly matched it with the rest of his costume by staining it with incredible promptitude. The good man waited till his housekeeper told him that his hat was too shabby before buying a new one. His necktie was always crumpled and starchless, and he never set his dog-eared shirt collar straight

after his judge's hands had disordered it. He took no care of his gray hair, and shaved but twice a week. He never wore gloves, and generally kept his hands stuffed into his empty trousers' pockets; the soiled pocket-holes, almost always torn, added a final touch to the slovenliness of his person.

Any one who knows the Palais de Justice at Paris, where every variety of black attire may be studied, can easily imagine the appearance of M. Popinot. The habit of sitting for days at a time modifies the structure of the body, just as the fatigue of hearing interminable pleadings tells on the expression of a magistrate's face. Shut up as he is in courts ridiculously small, devoid of architectural dignity, and where the air is quickly vitiated, a Paris judge inevitably acquires a countenance puckered and seamed by reflection, and depressed by weariness; his complexion turns pallid, acquiring an earthy or greenish hue according to his individual temperament. In short, within a given time the most blooming young man is turned into an "inasmuch" machine—an instrument which applies the Code to individual cases with the indifference of clockwork.

Hence, nature having bestowed on M. Popinot a not too pleasing exterior, his life as a lawyer had not improved it. His frame was graceless and angular. His thick knees, huge feet, and broad hands formed a contrast with a priest-like face having a vague resemblance to a calf's head, meek to unmeaningness, and but little brightened by divergent, bloodless eyes, divided by a straight flat nose, surmounted by a flat forehead, flanked by enormous ears, flabby and graceless. His thin, weak hair showed the baldness through various irregular partings.

One feature only commended this face to the physiognomist. This man had a mouth to whose lips divine kindness lent its sweetness. They were wholesome, full, red lips, finely wrinkled, sinuous, mobile, by which nature had given expression to noble feelings; lips which spoke to the heart and proclaimed the man's intelligence and lucidity, a gift of second-sight, and a heavenly temper; and you would have

judged him wrongly from looking merely at his sloping forehead, his fireless eyes, and his shambling gait. His life answered to his countenance; it was full of secret labor, and hid the virtue of a saint. His superior knowledge of law proved so strong a recommendation at the time when Napoleon was reorganizing it in 1808 and 1811, that, by the advice of Cambacérès, he was one of the first men named to sit on the Imperial High Court of Justice at Paris. Popinot was no schemer. Whenever any demand was made, any request preferred for an appointment, the Minister would overlook Popinot, who never set foot in the house of the High Chancellor or the Chief Justice. From the High Court he was sent down to the Common Court, and pushed to the lowest rung of the ladder by active struggling men. There he was appointed supernumerary judge. There was a general outcry among the lawyers: "Popinot a supernumerary!" Such injustice struck the legal world with dismay—the attorneys, the registrars, everybody but Popinot himself, who made no complaint. The first clamor over, everybody was satisfied that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, which must certainly be the legal world. Popinot remained supernumerary judge till the day when the most famous Great Seal under the Restoration avenged the oversights heaped on this modest and uncomplaining man by the Chief Justices of the Empire. After being a supernumerary for twelve years, M. Popinot would no doubt die a puisne judge of the Court of the Seine.

To account for the obscure fortunes of one of the superior men of the legal profession, it is necessary to enter here into some details which will serve to reveal his life and character, and which will, at the same time, display some of the wheels of the great machine known as Justice. M. Popinot was classed by the three Presidents who successively controlled the Court of the Seine under the category of possible judges, the stuff of which judges are made. Thus classified, he did not achieve the reputation for capacity which his previous labors had deserved. Just as a painter is invariably included

in a category as a landscape painter, a portrait painter, a painter of history, of sea pieces, or of genre, by a public consisting of artists, connoisseurs, and simpletons, who, out of envy, or critical omnipotence, or prejudice, fence in his intellect, assuming, one and all, that there are ganglions in every brain—a narrow judgment which the world applies to writers, to statesmen, to everybody who begins with some specialty before being hailed as omniscient; so Popinot's fate was sealed, and he was hedged round to do a particular kind of work. Magistrates, attorneys, pleaders, all who pasture on the legal common, distinguish two elements in every case—law and equity. Equity is the outcome of facts, law is the application of principles to facts. A man may be right in equity but wrong in law, without any blame to the judge. Between his conscience and the facts there is a whole gulf of determining reasons unknown to the judge, but which condemn or legitimatize the act. A judge is not God; his duty is to adapt facts to principles, to judge cases of infinite variety while measuring them by a fixed standard.

France employs about six thousand judges; no generation has six thousand great men at her command, much less can she find them in the legal profession. Popinot, in the midst of the civilization of Paris, was just a very clever cadi, who, by the character of his mind, and by dint of rubbing the letter of the law into the essence of facts, had learned to see the error of spontaneous and violent decisions. By the help of his judicial second-sight he could pierce the double casing of lies in which advocates hide the heart of a trial. He was a judge, as the great Desplein was a surgeon; he probed men's consciences as the anatomist probed their bodies. His life and habits had led him to an exact appreciation of their most secret thoughts by a thorough study of facts.

He sifted a case as Cuvier sifted the earth's crust. Like that great thinker, he proceeded from deduction to deduction before drawing his conclusions, and reconstructed the past career of a conscience as Cuvier reconstructed an Anoplotherium. When considering a brief he would often wake

in the night, startled by a gleam of truth suddenly sparkling in his brain. Struck by the deep injustice, which is the end of these contests, in which everything is against the honest man, everything to the advantage of the rogue, he often summed up in favor of equity against law in such cases as bore on questions of what may be termed divination. Hence he was regarded by his colleagues as a man not of a practical mind; his arguments on two lines of deduction made their deliberations lengthy. When Popinot observed their dislike to listening to him he gave his opinion briefly; it was said that he was not a good judge in this class of cases; but as his gift of discrimination was remarkable, his opinion lucid, and his penetration profound, he was considered to have a special aptitude for the laborious duties of an examining judge. So an examining judge he remained during the greater part of his legal career.

Although his qualifications made him eminently fitted for its difficult functions, and he had the reputation of being so learned in criminal law that his duty was a pleasure to him, the kindness of his heart constantly kept him in torture, and he was nipped as in a vise between his conscience and his pity. The services of an examining judge are better paid than those of a judge in civil actions, but they do not therefore prove a temptation; they are too onerous. Popinot, a man of modest and virtuous learning, without ambition, an indefatigable worker, never complained of his fate; he sacrificed his tastes and his compassionate soul to the public good, and allowed himself to be transported to the noisome pools of criminal examinations, where he showed himself alike severe and beneficent. His clerk sometimes would give the accused some money to buy tobacco, or a warm winter garment, as he led him back from the judge's office to the *Souricière,* the mouse-trap—the House of Detention where the accused are kept under the orders of the Examining Judge. He knew how to be an inflexible judge and a charitable man. And no one extracted a confession so easily as he without having recourse to judicial trickery. He had, too, all the acumen of an observer. This

man, apparently so foolishly good-natured, simple, and absent-minded, could guess all the cunning of a prison wag, unmask the astutest street huzzy, and subdue a scoundrel. Unusual circumstances had sharpened his perspicacity; but to relate these we must intrude on his domestic history, for in him the judge was the social side of the man; another man, greater and less known, existed within.

Twelve years before the beginning of this story, in 1816, during the terrible scarcity which coincided disastrously with the stay in France of the so-called Allies, Popinot was appointed President of the Commission Extraordinary formed to distribute food to the poor of his neighborhood, just when he had planned to move from the Rue du Fouarre, which he as little liked to live in as his wife did. The great lawyer, the clear-sighted criminal judge, whose superiority seemed to his colleagues a form of aberration, had for five years been watching legal results without seeing their causes. As he scrambled up into lofts, as he saw the poverty, as he studied the desperate necessities which gradually bring the poor to criminal acts, as he estimated their long struggles, compassion filled his soul The judge then became the Saint Vincent de Paul of these grown-up children, these suffering toilers. The transformation was not immediately complete. Beneficence has its temptations as vice has. Charity consumes a saint's purse, as roulette consumes the possessions of a gambler, quite gradually. Popinot went from misery to misery, from charity to charity; then, by the time he had lifted all the rags which cover public pauperism, like a bandage under which an inflamed wound lies festering, at the end of a year he had become the Providence incarnate of that quarter of the town. He was a member of the Benevolent Committee and of the Charity Organization. Wherever any gratuitous services were needed he was ready, and did everything without fuss, like the *man with the short cloak*, who spends his life in carrying soup round the markets and other places where there are starving folks.

Popinot was fortunate in acting on a larger circle and in

a higher sphere; he had an eye on everything, he prevented crime, he gave work to the unemployed, he found a refuge for the helpless, he distributed aid with discernment wherever danger threatened, he made himself the counselor of the widow, the protector of homeless children, the sleeping partner of small traders. No one at the Courts, no one in Paris, knew of this secret life of Popinot's. There are virtues so splendid that they necessitate obscurity; men make haste to hide them under a bushel. As to those whom the lawyer succored, they, hard at work all day and tired at night, were little able to sing his praises; theirs was the gracelessness of children, who can never pay because they owe too much. There is such compulsory ingratitude; but what heart that has sown good to reap gratitude can think itself great?

By the end of the second year of his apostolic work, Popinot had turned the storeroom at the bottom of his house into a parlor, lighted by the three iron-barred windows. The walls and ceiling of this spacious room were whitewashed, and the furniture consisted of wooden benches like those seen in schools, a clumsy cupboard, a walnut-wood writing-table, and an armchair. In the cupboard were his registers of donations, his tickets for orders for bread, and his diary. He kept his ledger like a tradesman, that he might not be ruined by kindness. All the sorrows of the neighborhood were entered and numbered in a book, where each had its little account, as merchants' customers have theirs. When there was any question as to a man or a family needing help, the lawyer could always command information from the police.

Lavienne, a man made for his master, was his aide-de-camp. He redeemed or renewed pawn-tickets, and visited the districts most threatened with famine, while his master was in court.

From four till seven in the morning in summer, from six till nine in winter, this room was full of women, children, and paupers, while Popinot gave audience. There was no need for a stove in winter; the crowd was so dense that the air was warmed; only, Lavienne strewed straw on the wet

floor. By long use the benches were as polished as varnished mahogany; at the height of a man's shoulders the wall had a coat of dark, indescribable color, given to it by the rags and tattered clothes of these poor creatures. The poor wretches loved Popinot so well that when they assembled before his door was opened, before daybreak on a winter's morning, the women warming themselves with their foot-brasiers, the men swinging their arms for circulation, never a sound had disturbed his sleep. Rag-pickers and other toilers of the night knew the house, and often saw a light burning in the lawyer's private room at unholy hours. Even thieves, as they passed by, said, "That is his house," and respected it. The morning he gave to the poor, the mid-day hours to criminals, the evening to law work.

Thus the gift of observation that characterized Popinot was necessarily *bifrons;* he could guess the virtues of a pauper —good feelings nipped, fine actions in embryo, unrecognized self-sacrifice, just as he could read at the bottom of a man's conscience the faintest outlines of a crime, the slenderest threads of wrongdoing, and infer all the rest.

Popinot's inherited fortune was a thousand crowns a year. His wife, sister to M. Bianchon *senior,* a doctor at Sancerre, had brought him about twice as much. She, dying five years since, had left her fortune to her husband. As the salary of a supernumerary judge is not large, and Popinot had been a fully salaried judge only for four years, we may guess his reasons for parsimony in all that concerned his person and mode of life, when we consider how small his means were and how great his beneficence. Besides, is not such indifference to dress as stamped Popinot an absent-minded man, a distinguishing mark of scientific attainment, of art passionately pursued, of a perpetually active mind? To complete this portrait, it will be enough to add that Popinot was one of the few judges of the Court of the Seine on whom the ribbon of the Legion of Honor had not been conferred.

Such was the man who had been instructed by the President of the Second Chamber of the Court—to which Popinot

had belonged since his reinstatement among the judges in civil law—to examine the Marquis d'Espard at the request of his wife, who sued for a Commission in Lunacy.

The Rue du Fouarre, where so many unhappy wretches swarmed in the early morning, would be deserted by nine o'clock, and as gloomy and squalid as ever. Bianchon put his horse to a trot in order to find his uncle in the midst of his business. It was not without a smile that he thought of the curious contrast the judge's appearance would make in Madame d'Espard's room; but he promised himself that he would persuade him to dress in a way that should not be too ridiculous.

"If only my uncle happens to have a new coat!" said Bianchon to himself, as he turned into the Rue du Fouarre, where a pale light shone from the parlor windows. "I shall do well, I believe, to talk that over with Lavienne."

At the sound of wheels half a score of startled paupers came out from under the gateway, and took off their hats on recognizing Bianchon; for the doctor, who treated gratuitously the sick recommended to him by the lawyer, was not less well known than he to the poor creatures assembled there.

Bianchon found his uncle in the middle of the parlor, where the benches were occupied by patients presenting such grotesque singularities of costume as would have made the least artistic passer-by turn round to gaze at them. A draughtsman—a Rembrandt, if there were one in our day—might have conceived of one of his finest compositions from seeing these children of misery, in artless attitudes, and all silent.

Here was the rugged countenance of an old man with a white beard and an apostolic head—a Saint Peter ready to hand; his chest, partly uncovered, showed salient muscles, the evidence of an iron constitution which had served him as a fulcrum to resist a whole poem of sorrows. There a young woman was suckling her youngest-born to keep it from crying, while another of about five stood between her knees.

Her white bosom, gleaming amid rags, the baby with its transparent flesh-tints, and the brother, whose attitude promised a street arab in the future, touched the fancy with pathos by its almost graceful contrast with the long row of faces crimson with cold, in the midst of which sat this family group. Further away, an old woman, pale and rigid, had the repulsive look of rebellious pauperism, eager to avenge all its past woes in one day of violence.

There, again, was the young workman, weakly and indolent, whose brightly intelligent eye revealed fine faculties crushed by necessity struggled with in vain, saying nothing of his sufferings, and nearly dead for lack of an opportunity to squeeze between the bars of the vast stews where the wretched swim round and round and devour each other.

The majority were women; their husbands, gone to their work, left it to them, no doubt, to plead the cause of the family with the ingenuity which characterizes the woman of the people, who is almost always queen in her hovel. You would have seen a torn bandana on every head, on every form a skirt deep in mud, ragged kerchiefs, worn and dirty jackets, but eyes that burnt like live coals. It was a horrible assemblage, raising at first sight a feeling of disgust, but giving a certain sense of terror the instant you perceived that the resignation of these souls, all engaged in the struggle for every necessary of life, was purely fortuitous, a speculation on benevolence. The two tallow candles which lighted the parlor flickered in a sort of fog caused by the fetid atmosphere of the ill-ventilated room.

The magistrate himself was not the least picturesque figure in the midst of this assembly. He had on his head a rusty cotton night-cap; as he had no cravat, his neck was visible, red with cold and wrinkled, in contrast with the threadbare collar of his old dressing-gown. His worn face had the half-stupid look that comes of absorbed attention. His lips, like those of all men who work, were puckered up like a bag with the strings drawn tight. His knitted brows seemed to bear the burden of all the sorrows confided to him: he felt,

analyzed, and judged them all. As watchful as a Jew money-lender, he never raised his eyes from his books and registers but to look into the very heart of the persons he was examining, with the flashing glance by which a miser expresses his alarm.

Lavienne, standing behind his master, ready to carry out his orders, served no doubt as a sort of police, and welcomed newcomers by encouraging them to get over their shyness. When the doctor appeared there was a stir on the benches. Lavienne turned his head, and was strangely surprised to see Bianchon.

"Ah! It is you, old boy!" exclaimed Popinot, stretching himself. "What brings you so early?"

"I was afraid lest you should make an official visit about which I wish to speak to you before I could see you."

"Well," said the lawyer, addressing a stout little woman who was still standing close to him, "if you do not tell me what it is you want, I cannot guess it, child."

"Make haste," said Lavienne. "Do not waste other people's time."

"Monsieur," said the woman at last, turning red, and speaking so low as only to be heard by Popinot and Lavienne, "I have a green-grocery truck, and I have my last baby out at nurse, and I owe for his keep. Well, I had hidden my little bit of money——"

"Yes; and your man took it?" said Popinot, guessing the sequel.

"Yes, sir."

"What is your name?"

"La Pomponne."

"And your husband's?"

"Toupinet."

"Rue du Petit-Banquier?" said Popinot, turning over his register. "He is in prison," he added, reading a note at the margin of the section in which this family was described.

"For debt, my kind monsieur."

Popinot shook his head.

"But I have nothing to buy any stock for my truck; the landlord came yesterday and made me pay up; otherwise I should have been turned out."

Lavienne bent over his master, and whispered in his ear.

"Well, how much do you want to buy fruit in the market?"

"Why, my good monsieur, to carry on my business, I should want—Yes, I should certainly want ten francs."

Popinot signed to Lavienne, who took ten francs out of a large bag, and handed them to the woman, while the lawyer made a note of the loan in his ledger. As he saw the thrill of delight that made the poor hawker tremble, Bianchon understood the apprehensions that must have agitated her on her way to the lawyer's house.

"You next," said Lavienne to the old man with the white beard.

Bianchon drew the servant aside, and asked him how long this audience would last.

"Monsieur has had two hundred persons this morning, and there are eighty to be turned off," said Lavienne. "You will have time to pay your early visit, sir."

"Here, my boy," said the lawyer, turning round and taking Horace by the arm; "here are two addresses near this—one in the Rue de Seine, and the other in the Rue de l'Arbalète. Go there at once. Rue de Seine, a young girl has just asphyxiated herself; and Rue de l'Arbalète, you will find a man to remove to your hospital. I will wait breakfast for you."

Bianchon returned an hour later. The Rue du Fouarre was deserted; day was beginning to dawn there; his uncle had gone up to his rooms; the last poor wretch whose misery the judge had relieved was departing, and Lavienne's money bag was empty.

"Well, how are they going on?" asked the old lawyer, as the doctor came in.

"The man is dead," replied Bianchon; "the girl will get over it."

Since the eye and hand of a woman had been lacking, the flat in which Popinot lived had assumed an aspect in harmony with its master's. The indifference of a man who is absorbed in one dominant idea had set its stamp of eccentricity on everything. Everywhere lay unconquerable dust, every object was adapted to a wrong purpose with a pertinacity suggestive of a bachelor's home. There were papers in the flower vases, empty ink-bottles on the tables, plates that had been forgotten, matches used as tapers for a minute when something had to be found, drawers or boxes half-turned out and left unfinished; in short, all the confusion and vacancies resulting from plans for order never carried out. The lawyer's private room, especially disordered by this incessant rummage, bore witness to his unresting pace, the hurry of a man overwhelmed with business, hunted by contradictory necessities. The bookcase looked as if it had been sacked; there were books scattered over everything, some piled up open, one on another, others on the floor face downwards; registers of proceedings laid on the floor in rows, lengthwise, in front of the shelves; and that floor had not been polished for two years.

The tables and shelves were covered with *ex votos,* the offerings of the grateful poor. On a pair of blue glass jars which ornamented the chimney-shelf there were two glass balls, of which the core was made up of many-colored fragments, giving them the appearance of some singular natural product. Against the wall hung frames of artificial flowers, and decorations in which Popinot's initials were surrounded by hearts and everlasting flowers. Here were boxes of elaborate and useless cabinet work; there letter-weights carved in the style of work done by convicts in penal servitude. These masterpieces of patience, enigmas of gratitude, and withered bouquets gave the lawyer's room the appearance of a toyshop. The good man used these works of art as hiding-places which he filled with bills, worn-out pens, and scraps of paper. All these pathetic witnesses to his divine charity were thick with dust, dingy, and faded.

Some birds, beautifully stuffed, but eaten by moth, perched in this wilderness of trumpery, presided over by an Angora cat, Madame Popinot's pet, restored to her no doubt with all the graces of life by some impecunious naturalist, who thus repaid a gift of charity with a perennial treasure. Some local artist whose heart had misguided his brush had painted portraits of M. and Madame Popinot. Even in the bedroom there were embroidered pin-cushions, landscapes in cross-stitch, and crosses in folded paper, so elaborately cockled as to show the senseless labor they had cost.

The window-curtains were black with smoke, and the hangings absolutely colorless. Between the fireplace and the large square table at which the magistrate worked, the cook had set two cups of coffee on a small table, and two armchairs, in mahogany and horsehair, awaited the uncle and nephew. As daylight, darkened by the windows, could not penetrate to this corner, the cook had left two dips burning, whose unsnuffed wicks showed a sort of mushroom growth, giving the red light which promises length of life to the candle from slowness of combustion—a discovery due to some miser.

"My dear uncle, you ought to wrap yourself more warmly when you go down to that parlor."

"I cannot bear to keep them waiting, poor souls!—Well, and what do you want of me?"

"I have come to ask to you to dine to-morrow with the Marquise d'Espard."

"A relation of ours?" asked Popinot, with such genuine absence of mind that Bianchon laughed.

"No, uncle; the Marquise d'Espard is a high and puissant lady, who has laid before the Courts a petition desiring that a Commission in Lunacy should sit on her husband, and you are appointed——"

"And you want me to dine with her! Are you mad?" said the lawyer, taking up the code of proceedings. "Here, only read this article, prohibiting any magistrate's eating or drinking in the house of either of two parties whom he is called upon to decide between. Let her come and see me, your Mar-

quise, if she has anything to say to me. I was, in fact, to go to examine her husband to-morrow, after working the case up to-night."

He rose, took up a packet of papers that lay under a weight where he could see it, and after reading the title, he said:

"Here is the affidavit. Since you take an interest in this high and puissant lady, let us see what she wants."

Popinot wrapped his dressing-gown across his body, from which it was constantly slipping and leaving his chest bare; he sopped his bread in the half-cold coffee, and opened the petition, which he read, allowing himself to throw in a parenthesis now and then, and some discussions, in which his nephew took part:—

" 'To Monsieur the President of the Civil Tribunal of the Lower Court of the Department of the Seine, sitting at the Palais de Justice.

" 'Madame Jeanne Clémentine Athénaïs de Blamont-Chauvry, wife of M. Charles Maurice Marie Andoche, Comte de Nègrepelisse, Marquis d'Espard'—a very good family—'landowner, the said Mme. d'Espard living in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, No. 104, and the said M. d'Espard in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, No. 22,'—to be sure, the President told me he lived in this part of the town—'having for her solicitor Maître Desroches'—Desroches! a pettifogging jobber, a man looked down upon by his brother lawyers, and who does his clients no good——"

"Poor fellow!" said Bianchon, "unluckily he has no money, and he rushes round like the devil in holy water—That is all."

" 'Has the honor to submit to you, Monsieur the President, that for a year past the moral and intellectual powers of her husband, M. d'Espard, have undergone so serious a change, that at the present day they have reached the state of dementia and idiocy provided for by Article 448 of the Civil Code, and require the application of the remedies set forth by that article, for the security of his fortune and his person, and to guard the interest of his children whom he keeps to live with him.

"'That, in point of fact, the mental condition of M. d'Espard, which for some years has given grounds for alarm based on the system he has pursued in the management of his affairs, has reached, during the last twelvemonth, a deplorable depth of depression; that his infirm will was the first thing to show the results of the malady; and that its effete state leaves M. the Marquis d'Espard exposed to all the perils of his incompetency, as is proved by the following facts:

"'For a long time all the income accruing from M. d'Espard's estates are paid, without any reasonable cause, or even temporary advantage, into the hands of an old woman, whose repulsive ugliness is generally remarked on, named Madame Jeanrenaud, living sometimes in Paris, Rue de la Vrillière, No. 8, sometimes at Villeparisis, near Claye, in the Department of Seine et Marne, and for the benefit of her son, aged thirty-six, an officer in the ex-Imperial Guards, whom the Marquis d'Espard has placed by his influence in the King's Guards, as Major in the First Regiment of Cuirassiers. These two persons, who in 1814 were in extreme poverty, have since then purchased house-property of considerable value; among other items, quite recently, a large house in the Grande Rue Verte, where the said Jeanrenaud is laying out considerable sums in order to settle there with the woman Jeanrenaud, intending to marry; these sums amount already to more than a hundred thousand francs. The marriage has been arranged by the intervention of M. d'Espard with his banker, one Mongenod, whose niece he has asked in marriage for the said Jeanrenaud, promising to use his influence to procure him the title and dignity of Baron. This has in fact been secured by His Majesty's letters patent, dated December 29th of last year, at the request of the Marquis d'Espard, as can be proved by His Excellency the Keeper of the Seals, if the Court should think proper to require his testimony.

"'That no reason, not even such as morality and the law would concur in disapproving, can justify the influence which the said Mme. Jeanrenaud exerts over M. d'Espard, who,

indeed, sees her very seldom; nor account for his strange affection for the said Baron Jeanrenaud, Major with whom he has but little intercourse. And yet their power is so considerable, that whenever they need money, if only to gratify a mere whim, this lady, or her son——' Heh, heh! *no reason even such as morality and the law concur in disapproving!* What does the clerk or the attorney mean to insinuate?" said Popinot.

Bianchon laughed.

" 'This lady, or her son, obtain whatever they ask of the Marquis d'Espard without demur; and if he has not ready money, M. d'Espard draws bills to be paid by the said Mongenod, who has offered to give evidence to that effect for the petitioner.

" 'That, moreover, in further proof of these facts, lately, on the occasion of the renewal of the leases on the Espard estate, the farmers having paid a considerable premium for the renewal of their leases on the old terms, M. Jeanrenaud at once secured the payment of it into his own hands.

" 'That the Marquis d'Espard parts with these sums of money so little of his own free-will, that when he was spoken to on the subject he seemed to remember nothing of the matter; that whenever anybody of any weight has questioned him as to his devotion to these two persons, his replies have shown so complete an absence of ideas and of sense of his own interests, that there obviously must be some occult cause at work to which the petitioner begs to direct the eye of justice, inasmuch as it is impossible but that this cause should be criminal, malignant, and wrongful, or else of a nature to come under medical jurisdiction; unless this influence is of the kind which constitutes an abuse of moral power—such as can only be described by the word *possession*——' The devil!" exclaimed Popinot. "What do you say to that, doctor? These are strange statements."

"They might certainly," said Bianchon, "be an effect of magnetic force."

"Then do you believe in Mesmer's nonsense, and his tub, and seeing through walls?"

"Yes, uncle," said the doctor gravely. "As I heard you read that petition I thought of that. I assure you that I have verified, in another sphere of action, several analogous facts proving the unlimited influence one man may acquire over another. In contradiction to the opinion of my brethren, I am perfectly convinced of the power of the will regarded as a motor force. All collusion and charlatanism apart, I have seen the results of such a possession. Actions promised during sleep by a magnetized patient to the magnetizer have been scrupulously performed on waking. The will of one had become the will of the other."

"Every kind of action?"

"Yes."

"Even a criminal act?"

"Even a crime."

"If it were not from you, I would not listen to such a thing."

"I will make you witness it," said Bianchon.

"Hm, hm," muttered the lawyer. "But supposing that this so-called possession fell under this class of facts, it would be difficult to prove it as legal evidence."

"If this woman Jeanrenaud is so hideously old and ugly, I do not see what other means of fascination she can have used," observed Bianchon.

"But," observed the lawyer, "in 1814, the time at which this fascination is supposed to have taken place, this woman was fourteen years younger; if she had been connected with M. d'Espard ten years before that, these calculations take us back four-and-twenty years, to a time when the lady may have been young and pretty, and have won for herself and her son a power over M. d'Espard which some men do not know how to evade. Though the source of this power is reprehensible in the sight of justice, it is justifiable in the eye of nature. Madame Jeanrenaud may have been aggrieved by the marriage, contracted probably at about that time, between the Marquis d'Espard and Mademoiselle de Blamont-Chauvry, and at the bottom of all this there may be nothing

more than the rivalry of two women, since the Marquis has for a long time lived apart from Mme. d'Espard."

"But her repulsive ugliness, uncle?"

"Power of fascination is in direct proportion to ugliness," said the lawyer; "that is an old story. And then think of the smallpox, doctor. But to proceed.

" 'That so long ago as in 1815, in order to supply the sums of money required by these two persons, the Marquis d'Espard went with his two children to live in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, in rooms quite unworthy of his name and rank'—well, we may live as we please—'that he keeps his two children there, the Comte Clément d'Espard and Vicomte Camille d'Espard, in a style of living quite unsuited to their future prospects, their name and fortune; that he often wants money, to such a point, that not long since the landlord, one Mariast, put in an execution on the furniture in the rooms; that when this execution was carried out in his presence, the Marquis d'Espard helped the bailiff, whom he treated like a man of rank, paying him all the marks of attention and respect which he would have shown to a person of superior birth and dignity to himself.' "

The uncle and nephew glanced at each other and laughed.

" 'That, moreover, every act of his life, besides the facts with reference to the widow Jeanrenaud and the Baron Jeanrenaud, her son, are those of a madman; that for nearly ten years he has given his thoughts exclusively to China, its customs, manners, and history; that he refers everything to a Chinese origin; that when he is questioned on the subject, he confuses the events of the day and the business of yesterday with facts relating to China; that he censures the acts of the Government and the conduct of the King, though he is personally much attached to him, by comparing them with the politics of China;

" 'That this monomania has driven the Marquis d'Espard to conduct devoid of all sense: against the customs of men of rank, and, in opposition to his own professed ideas as to the duties of the nobility, he has joined a commercial under-

taking, for which he constantly draws bills which, as they fall due, threaten both his honor and his fortune, since they stamp him as a trader, and in default of payment may lead to his being declared insolvent; that these debts, which are owing to stationers, printers, lithographers, and print-colorists, who have supplied the materials for his publication, called *A Picturesque History of China,* now coming out in parts, are so heavy that these tradesmen have requested the petitioner to apply for a Commission in Lunacy with regard to the Marquis d'Espard in order to save their own credit.' "

"The man is mad!" exclaimed Bianchon.

"You think so, do you?" said his uncle. "If you listen to only one bell, you hear only one sound."

"But it seems to me——" said Bianchon.

"But it seems to me," said Popinot, "that if any relation of mine wanted to get hold of the management of my affairs, and if, instead of being a humble lawyer, whose colleagues can, any day, verify what this condition is, I were a duke of the realm, an attorney with a little cunning, like Desroches, might bring just such a petition against me.

" 'That his children's education has been neglected for this monomania; and that he has taught them, against all the rules of education, the facts of Chinese history, which contradict the tenets of the Catholic Church. He also has them taught the Chinese dialects.' "

"Here Desroches strikes me as funny," said Bianchon.

"The petition is drawn up by his head-clerk Godeschal, who, as you know, is not strong in Chinese," said the lawyer.

" 'That he often leaves his children destitute of the most necessary things; that the petitioner, notwithstanding her entreaties, can never see them; that the said Marquis d'Espard brings them to her only once a year; that, knowing the privations to which they are exposed, she makes vain efforts to give them the things most necessary for their existence, and which they require——' Oh! Madame la Marquise, this is preposterous. By proving too much you prove nothing.— My dear boy," said the old man, laying the document on his

knee, "where is the mother who ever lacked heart and wit and yearning to such a degree as to fall below the inspirations suggested by her animal instinct? A mother is as cunning to get at her children as a girl can be in the conduct of a love intrigue. If your Marquise really wanted to give her children food and clothes, the Devil himself would not have hindered her, heh? That is rather too big a fable for an old lawyer to swallow!—To proceed.

" 'That at the age the said children have now attained it is necessary that steps should be taken to preserve them from the evil effects of such an education; that they should be provided for as beseems their rank, and that they should cease to have before their eyes the sad example of their father's conduct;

" 'That there are proofs in support of these allegations which the Court can easily order to be produced. Many times has M. d'Espard spoken of the judge of the Twelfth Arrondissement as a mandarin of the third class; he often speaks of the professors of the Collège Henri IV. as "men of letters" '—and that offends them! 'In speaking of the simplest things, he says, "They were not done so in China;" in the course of the most ordinary conversation he will sometimes allude to Madame Jeanrenaud, or sometimes to events which happened in the time of Louis XIV., and then sit plunged in the darkest melancholy; sometimes he fancies he is in China. Several of his neighbors, among others one Edmé Becker, medical student, and Jean Baptiste Frémiot, a professor, living under the same roof, are of opinion, after frequent intercourse with the Marquis d'Espard, that his monomania with regard to everything Chinese is the result of a scheme laid by the said Baron Jeanrenaud and the widow his mother to bring about the deadening of all the Marquis d'Espard's mental faculties, since the only service which Mme. Jeanrenaud appears to render M. d'Espard is to procure him everything that relates to the Chinese Empire;

" 'Finally, that the petitioner is prepared to show to the Court that the moneys absorbed by the said Baron and Mme.

Jeanrenaud between 1814 and 1828 amount to not less than one million francs.

"'In confirmation of the facts herein set forth, the petitioner can bring the evidence of persons who are in the habit of seeing the Marquis d'Espard, whose names and professions are subjoined, many of whom have urged her to demand a commission in lunacy to declare M. d'Espard incapable of managing his own affairs, as being the only way to preserve his fortune from the effects of his maladministration and his children from his fatal influence.

"'Taking all this into consideration, M. le Président, and the affidavits subjoined, the petitioner desires that it may please you, inasmuch as the foregoing facts sufficiently prove the insanity and incompetency of the Marquis d'Espard herein described with his titles and residence, to order that, to the end that he may be declared incompetent by law, this petition and the documents in evidence may be laid before the King's public prosecutor; and that you will charge one of the judges of this Court to make his report to you on any day you may be pleased to name, and thereupon to pronounce judgment,' etc.

"And here," said Popinot, "is the President's order instructing me!—Well, what does the Marquise d'Espard want with me? I know everything. But I shall go to-morrow with my registrar to see M. le Marquis, for this does not seem at all clear to me."

"Listen, my dear uncle, I have never asked the least little favor of you that had to do with your legal functions; well, now I beg you to show Madame d'Espard the kindness which her situation deserves. If she came here, you would listen to her?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, go and listen to her in her own house. Madame d'Espard is a sickly, nervous, delicate woman, who would faint in your rat-hole of a place. Go in the evening, instead of accepting her dinner, since the law forbids your eating or drinking at your client's expense."

"And does not the law forbid you from taking any legacy from your dead?" said Popinot, fancying that he saw a touch of irony on his nephew's lips.

"Come, uncle, if it were only to enable you to get at the truth of this business, grant my request. You will come as the examining judge, since matters do not seem to you very clear. Deuce take it! It is as necessary to cross-question the Marquise as it is to examine the Marquis."

"You are right," said the lawyer. "It is quite possible that it is she who is mad. I will go."

"I will call for you. Write down in your engagement book: 'To-morrow evening at nine, Madame d'Espard.'—Good!" said Bianchon, seeing his uncle make a note of the engagement.

Next evening at nine Bianchon mounted his uncle's dusty staircase, and found him at work on the statement of some complicated judgment. The coat Lavienne had ordered of the tailor had not been sent, so Popinot put on his old stained coat, and was the Popinot unadorned whose appearance made those laugh who did not know the secrets of his private life. Bianchon, however, obtained permission to pull his cravat straight, and to button his coat, and he hid the stains by crossing the breast of it with the right side over the left, and so displaying the new front of the cloth. But in a minute the judge rucked the coat up over his chest by the way in which he stuffed his hands into his pockets, obeying an irresistible habit. Thus the coat, deeply wrinkled both in front and behind, made a sort of hump in the middle of the back, leaving a gap between the waistcoat and trousers through which his shirt showed. Bianchon, to his sorrow, only discovered this crowning absurdity at the moment when his uncle entered the Marquise's room.

A brief sketch of the person and the career of the lady in whose presence the doctor and the judge now found themselves is necessary for an understanding of her interview with Popinot.

Madame d'Espard had, for the last seven years, been very much the fashion in Paris, where Fashion can raise and drop by turns various personages who, now great and now small, that is to say, in view or forgotten, are at last quite intolerable—as discarded ministers are, and every kind of decayed sovereignty. These flatterers of the past, odious with their stale pretensions, know everything, speak ill of everything, and, like ruined profligates, are friends with all the world. Since her husband had separated from her in 1815, Madame d'Espard must have married in the beginning of 1812. Her children, therefore, were aged respectively fifteen and thirteen. By what luck was the mother of a family, about three-and-thirty years of age, still the fashion?

Though Fashion is capricious, and no one can foresee who shall be her favorites, though she often exalts a banker's wife, or some woman of very doubtful elegance and beauty, it certainly seems supernatural when Fashion puts on constitutional airs and gives promotion for age. But in this case Fashion had done as the world did, and accepted Madame d'Espard as still young.

The Marquise, who was thirty-three by her register of birth, was twenty-two in a drawing-room in the evening. But by what care, what artifice! Elaborate curls shaded her temples. She condemned herself to live in twilight, affecting illness so as to sit under the protecting tones of light filtered through muslin. Like Diane de Poitiers, she used cold water in her bath, and, like her again, the Marquise slept on a horse-hair mattress, with morocco-covered pillows to preserve her hair; she ate very little, only drank water, and observed monastic regularity in the smallest actions of her life.

This severe system has, it is said, been carried so far as to the use of ice instead of water, and nothing but cold food, by a famous Polish lady of our day who spends a life, now verging on a century old, after the fashion of a town belle. Fated to live as long as Marion Delorme, whom history has credited with surviving to be a hundred and thirty, the old vice-queen of Poland, at the age of nearly a hundred, has the heart and

brain of youth, a charming face, an elegant shape; and in her conversation, sparkling with brilliancy like faggots in the fire, she can compare the men and books of our literature with the men and books of the eighteenth century. Living in Warsaw, she orders her caps of Herbault in Paris. She is a great lady with the amiability of a mere girl; she swims, she runs like a schoolboy, and can sink on to a sofa with the grace of a young coquette; she mocks at death, and laughs at life. After having astonished the Emperor Alexander, she can still amaze the Emperor Nicholas by the splendor of her entertainments. She can still bring tears to the eyes of a youthful lover, for her age is whatever she pleases, and she has the exquisite self-devotion of a *grisette*. In short, she is herself a fairy tale, unless, indeed, she is a fairy.

Had Madame d'Espard known Madame Zayonseck? Did she mean to imitate her career? Be that as it may, the Marquise proved the merits of the treatment; her complexion was clear, her brow unwrinkled, her figure, like that of Henri II.'s lady-love, preserved the litheness, the freshness, the covered charms which bring a woman love and keep it alive. The simple precautions of this course, suggested by art and nature, and perhaps by experience, had met in her with a general system which confirmed the results. The Marquise was absolutely indifferent to everything that was not herself: men amused her, but no man had ever caused her those deep agitations which stir both natures to their depths, and wreck one on the other. She knew neither hatred nor love. When she was offended, she avenged herself coldly, quietly, at her leisure, waiting for the opportunity to gratify the ill-will she cherished against anybody who dwelt in her unfavorable remembrance. She made no fuss, she did not excite herself, she talked, because she knew that by two words a woman may cause the death of three men.

She had parted from M. d'Espard with the greatest satisfaction. Had he not taken with him two children who at present were troublesome, and in the future would stand in the way of her pretensions? Her most intimate friends, as

much as her least persistent admirers, seeing about her none of Cornelia's jewels, who come and go, and unconsciously betray their mother's age, took her for quite a young woman. The two boys, about whom she seemed so anxious in her petition, were, like their father, as unknown in the world as the northwest passage is unknown to navigators. M. d'Espard was supposed to be an eccentric personage who had deserted his wife without having the smallest cause for complaint against her.

Mistress of herself at two-and-twenty, and mistress of her fortune of twenty-six thousand francs a year, the Marquise hesitated long before deciding on a course of action and ordering her life. Though she benefited by the expenses her husband had incurred in his house, though she had all the furniture, the carriages, the horses, in short, all the details of a handsome establishment, she lived a retired life during the years 1816, 17, and 18, a time when families were recovering from the disasters resulting from political tempests. She belonged to one of the most important and illustrious families of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and her parents advised her to live with them as much as possible after the separation forced upon her by her husband's inexplicable caprice.

In 1820 the Marquise roused herself from her lethargy; she went to Court, appeared at parties, and entertained in her own house. From 1821 to 1827 she lived in great style, and made herself remarked for her taste and her dress; she had a day, an hour, for receiving visits, and ere long she had seated herself on the throne, occupied before her by Madame la Vicomtesse de Beauséant, the Duchesse de Langeais, and Madame Firmiani—who on her marriage with M. de Camps had resigned the sceptre in favor of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, from whom Madame d'Espard snatched it. The world knew nothing beyond this of the private life of the Marquise d'Espard. She seemed likely to shine for long on the Parisian horizon, like the sun near its setting, but which will never set.

The Marquise was on terms of great intimacy with a duchess as famous for her beauty as for her attachment to a prince just now in banishment, but accustomed to play a leading part in every prospective government. Madame d'Espard was also the friend of a foreign lady, with whom a famous and very wily Russian diplomate was in the habit of discussing public affairs. And then an antiquated countess, who was accustomed to shuffle the cards for the great game of politics, had adopted her in a maternal fashion. Thus, to any man of high ambitions, Madame d'Espard was preparing a covert but very real influence to follow the public and frivolous ascendency she now owed to fashion. Her drawing-room was acquiring political individuality: "What do they say at Madame d'Espard's?" "Are they against the measure in Madame d'Espard's drawing-room?" were questions repeated by a sufficient number of simpletons to give the flock of the faithful who surrounded her the importance of a coterie. A few damaged politicians whose wounds she had bound up, and whom she flattered, pronounced her as capable in diplomacy as the wife of the Russian ambassador to London. The Marquise had indeed several times suggested to deputies or to peers words and ideas that had rung through Europe. She had often judged correctly of certain events on which her circle of friends dared not express an opinion. The principal persons about the Court came in the evening to play whist in her rooms.

Then she also had the qualities of her defects; she was thought to be—and she was—discreet. Her friendship seemed to be staunch; she worked for her protégés with a persistency which showed that she cared less for patronage than for increased influence. This conduct was based on her dominant passion, Vanity. Conquests and pleasure, which so many women love, to her seemed only means to an end; she aimed at living on every point of the largest circle that life can describe.

Among the men still young, and to whom the future belonged, who crowded her drawing-room on great occasions,

were to be seen MM. de Marsay and de Ronquerolles, de Montriveau, de la Roche-Hugon, de Sérizy, Ferraud, Maxime de Trailles, de Listomère, the two Vandenesses, du Châtelet, and others. She would frequently receive a man whose wife she would not admit, and her power was great enough to induce certain ambitious men to submit to these hard conditions, such as two famous royalist bankers, M. de Nucingen and Ferdinand du Tillet. She had so thoroughly studied the strength and the weakness of Paris life, that her conduct had never given any man the smallest advantage over her. An enormous price might have been set on a note or letter by which she might have compromised herself, without one being produced.

If an arid soul enabled her to play her part to the life, her person was no less available for it. She had a youthful figure. Her voice was, at will, soft and fresh, or clear and hard. She possessed in the highest degree the secret of that aristocratic pose by which a woman wipes out the past. The Marquise knew well the art of setting an immense space between herself and the sort of man who fancies he may be familiar after some chance advances. Her imposing gaze could deny everything. In her conversation fine and beautiful sentiments and noble resolutions flowed naturally, as it seemed, from a pure heart and soul; but in reality she was all self, and quite capable of blasting a man who was clumsy in his negotiations, at the very time when she was shamelessly making a compromise for the benefit of her own interest.

Rastignac, in trying to fasten on to this woman, had discerned her to be the cleverest of tools, but he had not yet used it; far from handling it, he was already finding himself crushed by it. This young *Condottiere* of the brain, condemned, like Napoleon, to give battle constantly, while knowing that a single defeat would prove the grave of his fortunes, had met a dangerous adversary in his protectress. For the first time in his turbulent life, he was playing a game with a partner worthy of him. He saw a place as Minister in the conquest of Madame d'Espard, so he was her tool till he could make her his—a perilous beginning.

The Hôtel d'Espard needed a large household, and the Marquise had a great number of servants. The grand receptions were held in the ground-floor rooms, but she lived on the first floor of the house. The perfect order of a fine staircase splendidly decorated, and rooms fitted in the dignified style which formerly prevailed at Versailles, spoke of an immense fortune. When the judge saw the carriage gates thrown open to admit his nephew's cab, he took in with a rapid glance the lodge, the porter, the courtyard, the stables, the arrangement of the house, the flowers that decorated the stairs, the perfect cleanliness of the banisters, walls, and carpets, and counted the footmen in livery who, as the bell rang, appeared on the landing. His eyes, which only yesterday in his parlor had sounded the dignity of misery under the muddy clothing of the poor, now studied with the same penetrating vision the furniture and splendor of the rooms he passed through, to pierce to the misery of grandeur.

"M. Popinot—M. Bianchon."

The two names were pronounced at the door of the boudoir where the Marquise was sitting, a pretty room recently refurnished, and looking out on the garden behind the house. At the moment Madame d'Espard was seated in one of the old *rococo* armchairs of which Madame had set the fashion. Rastignac was at her left hand on a low chair, in which he looked settled like an Italian lady's "cousin." A third person was standing by the corner of the chimney-piece. As the shrewd doctor had suspected, the Marquise was a woman of a parched and wiry constitution. But for her regimen her complexion must have taken the ruddy tone that is produced by constant heat; but she added to the effect of her acquired pallor by the strong colors of the stuffs she hung her rooms with, or in which she dressed. Reddish-brown, marone, bistre with a golden light in it, suited her to perfection. Her boudoir, copied from that of a famous lady then at the height of fashion in London, was in tan-colored velvet; but she had added various details of ornament which moderated the pompous splendor of this royal hue. Her hair was dressed

like a girl's in bands ending in curls, which emphasized the rather long oval of her face; but an oval face is as majestic as a round one is ignoble. The mirrors, cut with facets to lengthen or flatten the face at will, amply prove the rule as applied to the physiognomy.

On seeing Popinot, who stood in the doorway craning his neck like a startled animal, with his left hand in his pocket, and the right hand holding a hat with a greasy lining, the Marquise gave Rastignac a look wherein lay a germ of mockery. The good man's rather foolish appearance was so completely in harmony with his grotesque figure and scared looks, that Rastignac, catching sight of Bianchon's dejected expression of humiliation through his uncle, could not help laughing, and turned away. The Marquise bowed a greeting, and made a great effort to rise from her seat, falling back again, not without grace, with an air of apologizing for her incivility by affected weakness.

At this instant the person who was standing between the fireplace and the door bowed slightly, and pushed forward two chairs, which he offered by a gesture to the doctor and the judge; then, when they had seated themselves, he leaned against the wall again, crossing his arms.

A word as to this man. There is living now, in our day, a painter—Decamps—who possesses in the very highest degree the art of commanding your interest in everything he sets before your eyes, whether it be a stone or a man. In this respect his pencil is more skilful than his brush. He will sketch an empty room and leave a broom against the wall. If he chooses, you shall shudder; you shall believe that this broom has just been the instrument of crime, and is dripping with blood; it shall be the broom which the widow Bancal used to clean out the room where Fualdès was murdered. Yes, the painter will touzle that broom like a man in a rage; he will make each hair of it stand on-end as though it were on your own bristling scalp; he will make it the interpreter between the secret poem of his imagination and the poem that shall have its birth in yours. After terrifying you by

the aspect of that broom, to-morrow he will draw another, and lying by it a cat, asleep, but mysterious in its sleep, shall tell you that this broom is that on which the wife of a German cobbler rides off to the Sabbath on the Brocken. Or it will be a quite harmless broom, on which he will hang the coat of a clerk in the Treasury. Decamps had in his brush what Paganini had in his bow—a magnetically communicative power.

Well, I should have to transfer to my style that striking genius, that marvelous knack of the pencil, to depict the upright, tall, lean man dressed in black, with black hair, who stood there without speaking a word. This gentleman had a face like a knife-blade, cold and harsh, with a color like Seine water when it is muddy and strewn with fragments of charcoal from a sunken barge. He looked at the floor, listening and passing judgment. His attitude was terrifying. He stood there like the dreadful broom to which Decamps has given the power of revealing a crime. Now and then, in the course of conversation, the Marquise tried to get some tacit advice; but however eager her questioning, he was as grave and as rigid as the statue of the Commendatore.

The worthy Popinot, sitting on the edge of his chair in front of the fire, his hat between his knees, stared at the gilt chandeliers, the clock, and the curiosities with which the chimney-shelf was covered, the velvet and trimmings of the curtains, and all the costly and elegant nothings that a woman of fashion collects about her. He was roused from his homely meditations by Madame d'Espard, who addressed him in a piping tone:

"Monsieur, I owe you a million thanks——"

"A million thanks," thought he to himself, "that is too many; it does not mean one."

"For the trouble you condescend——"

"Condescend!" thought he; "she is laughing at me."

"To take in coming to see an unhappy client, who is too ill to go out——"

Here the lawyer cut the Marquise short by giving her an

inquisitorial look, examining the sanitary condition of the unhappy client.

"As sound as a bell," said he to himself.

"Madame," said he, assuming a respectful mien, "you owe me nothing. Although my visit to you is not in strict accordance with the practice of the Court, we ought to spare no pains to discover the truth in cases of this kind. Our judgment is then guided less by the letter of the law than by the promptings of our conscience. Whether I seek the truth here or in my own consulting-room, so long as I find it, all will be well."

While Popinot was speaking, Rastignac was shaking hands with Bianchon; the Marquise welcomed the doctor with a little bow full of gracious significance.

"Who is that?" asked Bianchon in a whisper of Rastignac, indicating the dark man.

"The Chevalier d'Espard, the Marquis' brother."

"Your nephew told me," said the Marquise to Popinot, "how much you are occupied, and I know too that you are so good as to wish to conceal your kind actions, so as to release those whom you oblige from the burden of gratitude. The work in Court is most fatiguing, it would seem. Why have they not twice as many judges?"

"Ah, madame, that would not be difficult; we should be none the worse if they had. But when that happens, fowls will cut their teeth!"

As he heard this speech, so entirely in character with the lawyer's appearance, the Chevalier measured him from head to foot, out of one eye, as much as to say, "We shall easily manage him."

The Marquise looked at Rastignac, who bent over her. "That is the sort of man," murmured the dandy in her ear, "who is trusted to pass judgments on the life and interests of private individuals."

Like most men who have grown old in a business, Popinot readily let himself follow the habits he had acquired, more particularly habits of mind. His conversation was all of

"the shop." He was fond of questioning those he talked to, forcing them to unexpected conclusions, making them tell more than they wished to reveal. Pozzo di Borgo, it is said, used to amuse himself by discovering other folks' secrets, and entangling them in his diplomatic snares, and thus, by invincible habit, showed how his mind was soaked in wiliness. As soon as Popinot had surveyed the ground, so to speak, on which he stood, he saw that it would be necessary to have recourse to the cleverest subtleties, the most elaborately wrapped up and disguised, which were in use in the Courts, to detect the truth.

Bianchon sat cold and stern, as a man who has made up his mind to endure torture without revealing his sufferings; but in his heart he wished that his uncle could only trample on this woman as we trample on a viper—a comparison suggested to him by the Marquise's long dress, by the curve of her attitude, her long neck, small head, and undulating movements.

"Well, monsieur," said Madame d'Espard, "however great my dislike to be or seem selfish, I have been suffering too long not to wish that you may settle matters at once. Shall I soon get a favorable decision?"

"Madame, I will do my best to bring matters to a conclusion," said Popinot, with an air of frank good-nature. "Are you ignorant of the reason which made the separation necessary which now subsists between you and the Marquis d'Espard?"

"Yes, monsieur," she replied, evidently prepared with a story to tell. "At the beginning of 1816 M. d'Espard, whose temper had completely changed within three months or so, proposed that we should go to live on one of his estates near Briançon, without any regard for my health, which that climate would have destroyed, or for my habits of life; I refused to go. My refusal gave rise to such unjustifiable reproaches on his part, that from that hour I had my suspicions as to the soundness of his mind. On the following day he left me, leaving me his house and the free use of my own income, and

he went to live in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, taking with him my two children——"

"One moment, madame," said the lawyer, interrupting her. "What was that income?"

"Twenty-six thousand francs a year," she replied parenthetically. "I at once consulted old M. Bordin as to what I ought to do," she went on; "but it seems that there are so many difficulties in the way of depriving a father of the care of his children, that I was forced to resign myself to remaining alone at the age of twenty-two—an age at which many young women do very foolish things. You have read my petition, no doubt, monsieur; you know the principal facts on which I rely to procure a Commission in Lunacy with regard to M. d'Espard?"

"Have you ever applied to him, madame, to obtain the care of your children?"

"Yes, monsieur; but in vain. It is very hard on a mother to be deprived of the affection of her children, particularly when they can give her such happiness as every woman clings to."

"The elder must be sixteen," said Popinot.

"Fifteen," said the Marquise eagerly.

Here Bianchon and Rastignac looked at each other. Madame d'Espard bit her lips.

"What can the age of my children matter to you?"

"Well, madame," said the lawyer, without seeming to attach any importance to his words, "a lad of fifteen and his brother, of thirteen, I suppose, have legs and their wits about them; they might come to see you on the sly. If they do not, it is because they obey their father, and to obey him in that matter they must love him very dearly."

"I do not understand," said the Marquise.

"You do not know, perhaps," replied Popinot, "that in your petition your attorney represents your children as being very unhappy with their father?"

Madame d'Espard replied with charming innocence:

"I do not know what my attorney may have put into my mouth."

"Forgive my inferences," said Popinot, "but Justice weighs everything. What I ask you, madame, is suggested by my wish thoroughly to understand the matter. By your account M. d'Espard deserted you on the most frivolous pretext. Instead of going to Briançon, where he wished to take you, he remained in Paris. This point is not clear. Did he know this Madame Jeanrenaud before his marriage?"

"No, monsieur," replied the Marquise, with some asperity, visible only to Rastignac and the Chevalier d'Espard.

She was offended at being cross-questioned by this lawyer when she had intended to beguile his judgment; but as Popinot still looked stupid from sheer absence of mind, she ended by attributing his interrogatory to the Questioning Spirit of Voltaire's bailiff.

"My parents," she went on, "married me at the age of sixteen to M. d'Espard, whose name, fortune, and mode of life were such as my family looked for in the man who was to be my husband. M. d'Espard was then six-and-twenty; he was a gentleman in the English sense of the word; his manners pleased me, he seemed to have plenty of ambition, and I like ambitious people," she added, looking at Rastignac. "If M. d'Espard had never met that Madame Jeanrenaud, his character, his learning, his acquirements would have raised him—as his friends then believed—to high office in the Government. King Charles X., at that time Monsieur, had the greatest esteem for him, and a peer's seat, an appointment at Court, some important post certainly would have been his. That woman turned his head, and has ruined all the prospects of my family."

"What were M. d'Espard's religious opinions at that time?"

"He was, and is still, a very pious man."

"You do not suppose that Madame Jeanrenaud may have influenced him by mysticism?"

"No, monsieur."

"You have a very fine house, madame," said Popinot suddenly, taking his hands out of his pockets, and rising to pick up his coat-tails and warm himself. "This boudoir is very

nice, those chairs are magnificent, the whole apartment is sumptuous. You must indeed be most unhappy when, seeing yourself here, you know that your children are ill lodged, ill clothed, and ill fed. I can imagine nothing more terrible for a mother."

"Yes, indeed. I should be so glad to give the poor little fellows some amusement, while their father keeps them at work from morning till night at that wretched history of China."

"You give handsome balls; they would enjoy them, but they might acquire a taste for dissipation. However, their father might send them to you once or twice in the course of the winter."

"He brings them here on my birthday and on New Year's Day. On those days M. d'Espard does me the favor of dining here with them."

"It is very singular behavior," said the judge, with an air of conviction. "Have you ever seen this Dame Jeanrenaud?"

"My brother-in-law one day, out of interest in his brother——"

"Ah! monsieur is M. d'Espard's brother?" said the lawyer, interrupting her.

The Chevalier bowed, but did not speak.

"M. d'Espard, who has watched this affair, took me to the Oratoire, where this woman goes to sermon, for she is a Protestant. I saw her; she is not in the least attractive; she looks like a butcher's wife, extremely fat, horribly marked with the smallpox; she has feet and hands like a man's, she squints, in short, she is monstrous!"

"It is inconceivable," said the judge, looking like the most imbecile judge in the whole kingdom. "And this creature lives near here, Rue Verte, in a fine house? There are no plain folks left, it would seem?"

"In a mansion on which her son has spent absurd sums."

"Madame," said Popinot, "I live in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau; I know nothing of such expenses. What do you call absurd sums?"

"Well," said the Marquise, "a stable with five horses and three carriages, a phaeton, a brougham, and a cabriolet."

"That costs a large sum, then?" asked Popinot in surprise.

"Enormous sums!" said Rastignac, intervening. "Such an establishment would cost, for the stables, the keeping the carriages in order, and the liveries for the men, between fifteen and sixteen thousand francs a year."

"Should you think so, madame?" said the judge, looking much astonished.

"Yes, at least," replied the Marquise.

"And the furniture, too, must have cost a lot of money?"

"More than a hundred thousand francs," replied Madame d'Espard, who could not help smiling at the lawyer's vulgarity.

"Judges, madame, are apt to be incredulous; it is what they are paid for, and I am incredulous. The Baron Jean-renaud and his mother must have fleeced M. d'Espard most preposterously, if what you say is correct. There is a stable establishment which, by your account, costs sixteen thousand francs a year. Housekeeping, servants' wages, and the gross expenses of the house itself must run to twice as much; that makes a total of from fifty to sixty thousand francs a year. Do you suppose that these people, formerly so extremely poor, can have so large a fortune? A million yields scarcely forty thousand a year."

"Monsieur, the mother and son invested the money given them by M. d'Espard in the funds when they were at 60 to 80. I should think their income must be more than sixty thousand francs. And then the son has fine appointments."

"If they spend sixty thousand francs a year," said the judge, "how much do you spend?"

"Well," said Madame d'Espard, "about the same." The Chevalier started a little, the Marquise colored; Bianchon looked at Rastignac; but Popinot preserved an expression of simplicity which quite deceived Madame d'Espard. The Chevalier took no part in the conversation; he saw that all was lost.

"These people, madame, might be indicted before the superior Court," said Popinot.

"That was my opinion," exclaimed the Marquise, enchanted. "If threatened with the police, they would have come to terms."

"Madame," said Popinot, "when M. d'Espard left you, did he not give you a power of attorney enabling you to manage and control your own affairs?"

"I do not understand the object of all these questions," said the Marquise with petulance. "It seems to me that if you would only consider the state in which I am placed by my husband's insanity, you ought to be troubling yourself about him, and not about me."

"We are coming to that, madame," said the judge. "Before placing in your hands, or in any others, the control of M. d'Espard's property, supposing he were pronounced incapable, the Court must inquire as to how you have managed your own. If M. d'Espard gave you power, he would have shown confidence in you, and the Court would recognize the fact. Had you any power from him? You might have bought or sold house property or invested money in business?"

"No, monsieur, the Blamont-Chauvrys are not in the habit of trading," said she, extremely nettled in her pride as an aristocrat, and forgetting the business in hand. "My property is intact, and M. d'Espard gave me no power to act."

The Chevalier put his hand over his eyes not to betray the vexation he felt at his sister-in-law's short-sightedness, for she was ruining herself by her answers. Popinot had gone straight to the mark in spite of his apparent doublings.

"Madame," said the lawyer, indicating the Chevalier, "this gentleman, of course, is your near connection? May we speak openly before these other gentlemen?"

"Speak on," said the Marquise, surprised at this caution.

"Well, madame, granting that you spend only sixty thousand francs a year, to any one who sees your stables, your house, your train of servants, and a style of housekeeping

which strikes me as far more luxurious than that of the Jeanrenauds, that sum would seem well laid out."

The Marquise bowed an agreement.

"But," continued the judge, "if you have no more than twenty-six thousand francs a year, you may have a hundred thousand francs of debt. The Court would therefore have a right to imagine that the motives which prompt you to ask that your husband may be deprived of the control of his property are complicated by self-interest and the need of paying your debts—if—you—have—any. The requests addressed to me have interested me in your position; consider fully and make your confession. If my suppositions have hit the truth, there is yet time to avoid the blame which the Court would have a perfect right to express in the saving clauses of the verdict if you could not show your attitude to be absolutely honorable and clear.

"It is our duty to examine the motives of the applicant as well as to listen to the plea of the witness under examination, to ascertain whether the petitioner may not have been prompted by passion, by a desire for money, which is unfortunately too common——"

The Marquise was on Saint Laurence's gridiron.

"And I must have explanations on this point. Madame, I have no wish to call you to account; I only want to know how you have managed to live at the rate of sixty thousand francs a year, and that for some years past. There are plenty of women who achieve this in their housekeeping, but you are not one of those. Tell me, you may have the most legitimate resources, a royal pension, or some claim on the indemnities lately granted; but even then you must have had your husband's authority to receive them."

The Marquise did not speak.

"You must remember," Popinot went on, "that M. d'Espard may wish to enter a protest, and his counsel will have a right to find out whether you have any creditors. This boudoir is newly furnished, your rooms are not now furnished with the things left to you by M. d'Espard in 1816.

If, as you did me the honor of informing me, furniture is costly for the Jeanrenauds, it must be yet more so for you, who are a great lady. Though I am a judge, I am but a man; I may be wrong—tell me so. Remember the duties imposed on me by the law, and the rigorous inquiries it demands, when the case before it is the suspension from all his functions of the father of a family in the prime of life. So you will pardon me, Madame la Marquise, for laying all these difficulties before you; it will be easy for you to give me an explanation.

"When a man is pronounced incapable of the control of his own affairs, a trustee has to be appointed. Who will be the trustee?"

"His brother," said the Marquise.

The Chevalier bowed. There was a short silence, very uncomfortable for the five persons who were present. The judge, in sport as it were, had laid open the woman's sore place. Popinot's countenance of common, clumsy good-nature, at which the Marquise, the Chevalier, and Rastignac had been inclined to laugh, had gained importance in their eyes. As they stole a look at him, they discerned the various expressions of that eloquent mouth. The ridiculous mortal was a judge of acumen. His studious notice of the boudoir was accounted for: he had started from the gilt elephant supporting the chimney-clock, examining all this luxury, and had ended by reading this woman's soul.

"If the Marquis d'Espard is mad about China, I see that you are not less fond of its products," said Popinot, looking at the porcelain on the chimney-piece. "But perhaps it was from M. le Marquis that you had these charming Oriental pieces," and he pointed to some precious trifles.

This irony, in very good taste, made Bianchon smile, and petrified Rastignac, while the Marquise bit her thin lips.

"Instead of being the protector of a woman placed in a cruel dilemma—an alternative between losing her fortune and her children, and being regarded as her husband's enemy," she said, "you accuse me, monsieur! You suspect my motives! You must own that your conduct is strange!"

"Madame," said the judge eagerly, "the caution exercised by the Court in such cases as these might have given you, in any other judge, a perhaps less indulgent critic than I am.—And do you suppose that M. d'Espard's lawyer will show you any great consideration? Will he not be suspicious of motives which may be perfectly pure and disinterested? Your life will be at his mercy; he will inquire into it without qualifying his search by the respectful deference I have for you."

"I am much obliged to you, monsieur," said the Marquise satirically. "Admitting for the moment that I owe thirty thousand, or fifty thousand francs, in the first place, it would be a mere trifle to the d'Espards and the Blamont-Chauvrys. But if my husband is not in the possession of his mental faculties, would that prevent his being pronounced incapable?"

"No, madame," said Popinot.

"Although you have questioned me with a sort of cunning which I should not have suspected in a judge, and under circumstances where straightforwardness would have answered your purpose," she went on, "I will tell you without subterfuge that my position in the world, and the efforts I have to make to keep up my connection, are not in the least to my taste. I began my life by a long period of solitude; but my children's interest appealed to me; I felt that I must fill their father's place. By receiving my friends, by keeping up all this connection, by contracting these debts, I have secured their future welfare; I have prepared for them a brilliant career where they will find help and favor; and to have what has thus been acquired, many a man of business, lawyer or banker, would gladly pay all it has cost me."

"I appreciate your devoted conduct, madame," replied Popinot. "It does you honor, and I blame you for nothing. A judge belongs to all: he must know and weigh every fact."

Madame d'Espard's tact and practice in estimating men made her understand that M. Popinot was not to be influenced by any consideration. She had counted on an ambi-

tious lawyer, she had found a man of conscience. She at once thought of finding other means for securing the success of her side.

The servants brought in tea.

"Have you any further explanations to give me, madame?" said Popinot, seeing these preparations.

"Monsieur," she replied haughtily, "do your business your own way; question M. d'Espard, and you will pity me, I am sure." She raised her head, looking Popinot in the face with pride, mingled with impertinence; the worthy man bowed himself out respectfully.

"A nice man is your uncle," said Rastignac to Bianchon. "Is he really so dense? Does not he know what the Marquise d'Espard is, what her influence means, her unavowed power over people? The Keeper of the Seals will be with her to-morrow——"

"My dear fellow, how can I help it?" said Bianchon. "Did not I warn you? He is not a man you can get over."

"No," said Rastignac; "he is a man you must run over."

The doctor was obliged to make his bow to the Marquise and her mute Chevalier to catch up Popinot, who, not being the man to endure an embarrassing position, was pacing through the rooms.

"That woman owes a hundred thousand crowns," said the judge, as he stepped into his nephew's cab.

"And what do you think of the case?"

"I," said the judge. "I never have an opinion till I have gone into everything. To-morrow early I will send to Madame Jeanrenaud to call on me in my private office at four o'clock, to make her explain the facts which concern her, for she is compromised."

"I should very much like to know what the end will be."

"Why, bless me, do not you see that the Marquise is the tool of that tall lean man who never uttered a word? There is a strain of Cain in him, but of the Cain who goes to the Law Courts for his bludgeon, and there, unluckily for him, we keep more than one Damocles' sword."

"Oh, Rastignac! what brought you into that boat, I wonder?" exclaimed Bianchon.

"Ah, we are used to seeing these little family conspiracies," said Popinot. "Not a year passes without a number of verdicts of 'insufficient evidence' against applications of this kind. In our state of society such an attempt brings no dishonor, while we send a poor devil to the galleys who breaks a pane of glass dividing him from a bowl full of gold. Our Code is not faultless."

"But these are the facts?"

"My boy, do you not know all the judicial romances with which clients impose on their attorneys? If the attorneys condemned themselves to state nothing but the truth, they would not earn enough to keep their office open."

Next day, at four in the afternoon, a very stout dame, looking a good deal like a cask dressed up in a gown and belt, mounted Judge Popinot's stairs, perspiring and panting. She had, with great difficulty, got out of a green landau, which suited her to a miracle; you could not think of the woman without the landau, or the landau without the woman.

"It is I, my dear sir," said she, appearing in the doorway of the judge's room. "Madame Jeanrenaud, whom you summoned exactly as if I were a thief, neither more nor less."

The common words were spoken in a common voice, broken by the wheezing of asthma, and ending in a cough.

"When I go through a damp place, I can't tell you what I suffer, sir. I shall never make old bones, saving your presence. However, here I am."

The lawyer was quite amazed at the appearance of this supposed Maréchale d'Ancre. Madame Jeanrenaud's face was pitted with an infinite number of little holes, was very red, with a pug nose and a low forehead, and was as round as a ball; for everything about the good woman was round. She had the bright eyes of a country woman, an honest gaze, a cheerful tone, and chestnut hair held in place by a bonnet cap under a green bonnet decked with a shabby bunch of

auriculas. Her stupendous bust was a thing to laugh at, for it made one fear some grotesque explosion every time she coughed. Her enormous legs were of the shape which make the Paris street boy describe such a woman as being built on piles. The widow wore a green gown trimmed with chinchilla, which looked on her as a splash of dirty oil would look on a bride's veil. In short, everything about her harmonized with her last words: "Here I am."

"Madame," said Popinot, "you are suspected of having used some seductive arts to induce M. d'Espard to hand over to you very considerable sums of money."

"Of what! of what!" cried she. "Of seductive arts? But, my dear sir, you are a man to be respected, and, moreover, as a lawyer you ought to have some good sense. Look at me! Tell me if I am likely to seduce any one. I cannot tie my own shoes, nor even stoop. For these twenty years past, the Lord be praised, I have not dared to put on a pair of stays under pain of sudden death. I was as thin as an asparagus stalk when I was seventeen, and pretty too—I may say so now. So I married Jeanrenaud, a good fellow, and headman on the salt-barges. I had my boy, who is a fine young man; he is my pride, and it is not holding myself cheap to say he is my best piece of work. My little Jeanrenaud was a soldier who did Napoleon credit, and who served in the Imperial Guard. But, alas! at the death of my old man, who was drowned, times changed for the worse. I had the smallpox. I was kept two years in my room without stirring, and I came out of it the size you see me, hideous for ever, and as wretched as could be. These are my seductive arts."

"But what, then, can the reasons be that have induced M. d'Espard to give you sums——?"

"Hugious sums, monsieur, say the word; I do not mind. But as to his reasons, I am not at liberty to explain them."

"You are wrong. At this moment, his family, very naturally alarmed, are about to bring an action——"

"Heavens above us!" said the good woman, starting up. "Is it possible that he should be worried on my account?

That king of men, a man that has not his match! Rather than he should have the smallest trouble, or a hair less on his head I could almost say, we would return every sou, monsieur. Write that down on your papers. Heaven above us! I will go at once and tell Jeanrenaud what is going on! A pretty thing indeed!"

And the little old woman went out, rolled herself downstairs, and disappeared.

"That one tells no lies," said Popinot to himself. "Well, to-morrow I shall know the whole story, for I shall go to see the Marquis d'Espard."

People who have outlived the age when a man wastes his vitality at random, know how great an influence may be exercised on more important events by apparently trivial incidents, and will not be surprised at the weight here given to the following minor fact. Next day Popinot had an attack of coryza, a complaint which is not dangerous, and generally known by the absurd and inadequate name of a cold in the head.

The judge, who could not suppose that the delay could be serious, feeling himself a little feverish, kept his room, and did not go to see the Marquis d'Espard. This day lost was, to this affair, what on the Day of Dupes the cup of soup had been, taken by Marie de Medici, which, by delaying her meeting with Louis XIII., enabled Richelieu to arrive at Saint-Germain before her, and recapture his royal slave.

Before accompanying the lawyer and his registering clerk to the Marquis d'Espard's house, it may be as well to glance at the home and the private affairs of this father of sons whom his wife's petition represented to be a madman.

Here and there in the old parts of Paris a few buildings may still be seen in which the archæologist can discern an intention of decorating the city, and that love of property which leads the owner to give a durable character to the structure. The house in which M. d'Espard was then living, in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, was one of these old mansions, built in stone, and not devoid of a certain rich-

ness of style; but time had blackened the stone, and revolutions in the town had damaged it both outside and inside. The dignitaries who formerly dwelt in the neighborhood of the University having disappeared with the great ecclesiastical foundations, this house had become the home of industries and of inhabitants whom it was never destined to shelter. During the last century a printing establishment had worn down the polished floors, soiled the carved wood, blackened the walls, and altered the principal internal arrangements. Formerly the residence of a Cardinal, this fine house was now divided among plebeian tenants. The character of the architecture showed that it had been built under the reigns of Henry III., Henry IV., and Louis XIII., at the time when the hôtels Mignon and Serpente were erected in the same neighborhood, with the palace of the Princess Palatine, and the Sorbonne. An old man could remember having heard it called, in the last century, the hôtel Duperron, so it seemed probable that the illustrious Cardinal of that name had built, or perhaps merely lived in it.

There still exists, indeed, in the corner of the courtyard, a *perron* or flight of several outer steps by which the house is entered; and the way into the garden on the garden front is down a similar flight of steps. In spite of dilapidations, the luxury lavished by the architect on the balustrade and entrance porch crowning these two *perrons* suggests the simple-minded purpose of commemorating the owner's name, a sort of sculptured pun which our ancestors often allowed themselves. Finally, in support of this evidence, archæologists can still discern in the medallions which show on the principal front some traces of the cords of the Roman hat.

M. le Marquis d'Espard lived on the ground floor, in order, no doubt, to enjoy the garden, which might be called spacious for that neighborhood, and which lay open to the south, two advantages imperatively necessary for his children's health. The situation of the house, in a street on a steep hill, as its name indicates, secured these ground-floor rooms against ever being damp. M. d'Espard had taken them, no doubt,

for a very moderate price, rents being low at the time when he settled in that quarter, in order to be among the schools and to superintend his boys' education. Moreover, the state in which he found the place, with everything to repair, had no doubt induced the owner to be accommodating. Thus M. d'Espard had been able to go to some expense to settle himself suitably without being accused of extravagance. The loftiness of the rooms, the paneling, of which nothing survived but the frames, the decoration of the ceilings, all displayed the dignity which the prelacy stamped on whatever it attempted or created, and which artists discern to this day in the smallest relic that remains, though it be but a book, a dress, the panel of a bookcase, or an armchair.

The Marquis had the rooms painted in the rich brown tones beloved of the Dutch and of the citizens of Old Paris, hues which lend such good effects to the painter of *genre*. The panels were hung with plain paper in harmony with the paint. The window curtains were of inexpensive materials, but chosen so as to produce a generally happy result; the furniture was not too crowded and judiciously placed. Any one on going into this home could not resist a sense of sweet peacefulness, produced by the perfect calm, the stillness which prevailed, by the unpretentious unity of color, the keeping of the picture, in the words a painter might use. A certain nobleness in the details, the exquisite cleanliness of the furniture, and a perfect concord of men and things, all brought the word "suavity" to the lips.

Few persons were admitted to the rooms used by the Marquis and his two sons, whose life might perhaps seem mysterious to their neighbors. In a wing towards the street, on the third floor, there are three large rooms which had been left in the state of dilapidation and grotesque bareness to which they had been reduced by the printing works. These three rooms, devoted to the evolution of the *Picturesque History of China*, were contrived to serve as a writing-room, a depository, and a private room, where M. d'Espard sat during part of the day; for after breakfast till four in the afternoon

the Marquis remained in this room on the third floor to work at the publication he had undertaken. Visitors wanting to see him commonly found him there, and often the two boys on their return from school resorted thither. Thus the ground-floor rooms were a sort of sanctuary where the father and sons spent their time from the hour of dinner till the next day, and his domestic life was carefully closed against the public eye.

His only servants were a cook—an old woman who had long been attached to his family—and a man-servant forty years old, who was with him when he married Mademoiselle de Blamont. His children's nurse had also remained with them, and the minute care to which the apartment bore witness revealed the sense of order and the maternal affection expended by this woman in her master's interest, in the management of his house, and the charge of his children. These three good souls, grave and uncommunicative folk, seemed to have entered into the idea which ruled the Marquis' domestic life. And the contrast between their habits and those of most servants was a peculiarity which cast an air of mystery over the house, and fomented the calumny to which M. d'Espard himself lent occasion. Very laudable motives had made him determine never to be on visiting terms with any of the other tenants in the house. In undertaking to educate his boys he wished to keep them from all contact with strangers. Perhaps, too, he wished to avoid the intrusion of neighbors.

In a man of his rank, at a time when the *Quartier Latin* was distracted by Liberalism, such conduct was sure to rouse in opposition a host of petty passions, of feelings whose folly is only to be measured by their meanness, the outcome of porters' gossip and malevolent tattle from door to door, all unknown to M. d'Espard and his retainers. His man-servant was stigmatized as a Jesuit, his cook as a sly fox; the nurse was in collusion with Madame Jeanrenaud to rob the madman. The madman was the Marquis. By degrees the other tenants came to regard as proofs of madness a number of things they had noticed in M. d'Espard, and passed through

the sieve of their judgment without discerning any reasonable motive for them.

Having no belief in the success of the *History of China,* they had managed to convince the landlord of the house that M. d'Espard had no money just at a time when, with the forgetfulness which often befalls busy men, he had allowed the tax-collector to send him a summons for non-payment of arrears. The landlord had forthwith claimed his quarter's rent from January 1st by sending in a receipt, which the porter's wife had amused herself by detaining. On the 15th a summons to pay was served on M. d'Espard, the portress had delivered it at her leisure, and he supposed it to be some misunderstanding, not conceiving of any incivility from a man in whose house he had been living for twelve years. The Marquis was actually seized by a bailiff at the time when his man-servant had gone to carry the money for the rent to the landlord.

This arrest, assiduously reported to the persons with whom he was in treaty for his undertaking, had alarmed some of them who were already doubtful of M. d'Espard's solvency in consequence of the enormous sums which Baron Jeanrenaud and his mother were said to be receiving from him. And, indeed, these suspicions on the part of the tenants, the creditors, and the landlord had some excuse in the Marquis' extreme economy in housekeeping. He conducted it as a ruined man might. His servants always paid in ready money for the most trifling necessaries of life, and acted as not choosing to take credit; if now they had asked for anything on credit, it would probably have been refused, calumnious gossip had been so widely believed in the neighborhood. There are tradesmen who like those of their customers who pay badly when they see them often, while they hate others, and very good ones, who hold themselves on too high a level to allow of any familiarity as *chums,* a vulgar but expressive word. Men are made so; in almost every class they will allow to a gossip, or a vulgar soul that flatters them, facilities and favors they refuse to the superiority they resent, in whatever form

it may show itself. The shopkeeper who rails at the Court has his courtiers.

In short, the manners of the Marquis and his children were certain to arouse ill-feeling in their neighbors, and to work them up by degrees to the pitch of malevolence when men do not hesitate at an act of meanness if only it may damage the adversary they have themselves created.

M. d'Espard was a gentleman, as his wife was a lady, by birth and breeding; noble types, already so rare in France that the observer can easily count the persons who perfectly realize them. These two characters are based on primitive ideas, on beliefs that may be called innate, on habits formed in infancy, and which have ceased to exist. To believe in pure blood, in a privileged race, to stand in thought above other men, must we not from birth have measured the distance which divides patricians from the mob? To command, must we not have never met our equal? And finally, must not education inculcate the ideas with which Nature inspires those great men on whose brow she has placed a crown before their mother has ever set a kiss there? These ideas, this education, are no longer possible in France, where for forty years past chance has arrogated the right of making noblemen by dipping them in the blood of battles, by gilding them with glory, by crowning them with the halo of genius; where the abolition of entail and of eldest sonship, by frittering away estates, compels the nobleman to attend to his own business instead of attending to affairs of state, and where personal greatness can only be such greatness as is acquired by long and patient toil: quite a new era.

Regarded as a relic of that great institution known as feudalism, M. d'Espard deserved respectful admiration. If he believed himself to be by blood the superior of other men, he also believed in all the obligations of nobility; he had the virtues and the strength it demands. He had brought up his children in his own principles, and taught them from the cradle the religion of their caste. A deep sense of their own dignity, pride of name, the conviction that they were

by birth great, gave rise in them to a kingly pride, the courage of knights, and the protecting kindness of a baronial lord; their manners, harmonizing with their notions, would have become princes, and offended all the world of the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève—a world, above all others, of equality, where every one believed that M. d'Espard was ruined, and where all, from the lowest to the highest, refused the privileges of nobility to a nobleman without money, because they all were ready to allow an enriched bourgeois to usurp them. Thus the lack of communion between this family and other persons was as much moral as it was physical.

In the father and the children alike, their personality harmonized with the spirit within. M. d'Espard, at this time about fifty, might have sat as a model to represent the aristocracy of birth in the nineteenth century. He was slight and fair; there was in the outline and general expression of his face a native distinction which spoke of lofty sentiments, but it bore the impress of a deliberate coldness which commanded respect a little too decidedly. His aquiline nose bent at the tip from left to right, a slight crookedness which was not devoid of grace; his blue eyes, his high forehead, prominent enough at the brows to form a thick ridge that checked the light and shaded his eyes, all indicated a spirit of rectitude, capable of perseverance and perfect loyalty, while it gave a singular look to his countenance. This penthouse forehead might, in fact, hint at a touch of madness, and his thick-knitted eyebrows added to the apparent eccentricity. He had the white well-kept hands of a gentleman; his foot was high and narrow. His hesitating speech—not merely as to his pronunciation, which was that of a stammerer, but also in the expression of his ideas, his thought, and language—produced on the mind of the hearer the impression of a man who, in familiar phraseology, comes and goes, feels his way, tries everything, breaks off his gestures, and finishes nothing. This defect was purely superficial, and in contrast with the decisiveness of a firmly-set mouth, and

the strongly-marked character of his physiognomy. His rather jerky gait matched his mode of speech. These peculiarities helped to affirm his supposed insanity. In spite of his elegant appearance, he was systematically parsimonious in his personal expenses, and wore the same black frock-coat for three or four years, brushed with extreme care by his old man-servant.

As to the children, they both were handsome, and endowed with a grace which did not exclude an expression of aristocratic disdain. They had the bright coloring, the clear eye, the transparent flesh which reveal habits of purity, regularity of life, and a due proportion of work and play. They both had black hair and blue eyes, and a twist in their nose, like their father; but their mother, perhaps, had transmitted to them the dignity of speech, of look and mien, which are hereditary in the Blamont-Chauvrys. Their voices, as clear as crystal, had an emotional quality, the softness which proves so seductive; they had, in short, the voice a woman would willingly listen to after feeling the flame of their looks. But, above all, they had the modesty of pride, a chaste reserve, a *touch-me-not* which at a maturer age might have seemed intentional coyness, so much did their demeanor inspire a wish to know them. The elder, Comte Clément de Nègrepelisse, was close upon his sixteenth year. For the last two years he had ceased to wear the pretty English round jacket which his brother, Vicomte Camille d'Espard, still wore. The Count, who for the last six months went no more to the Collège Henri IV., was dressed in the style of a young man enjoying the first pleasures of fashion. His father had not wished to condemn him to a year's useless study of philosophy; he was trying to give his knowledge some consistency by the study of transcendental mathematics. At the same time, the Marquis was having him taught Eastern languages, the international law of Europe, heraldry, and history from the original sources—charters, early documents, and collections of edicts. Camille had lately begun to study rhetoric.

The day when Popinot arranged to go to question M. d'Espard was a Thursday, a holiday. At about nine in the morning, before their father was awake, the brothers were playing in the garden. Clément was finding it hard to refuse his brother, who was anxious to go to the shooting-gallery for the first time, and who begged him to second his request to the Marquis. The Viscount always rather took advantage of his weakness, and was very fond of wrestling with his brother. So the couple were quarreling and fighting in play like schoolboys. As they ran in the garden, chasing each other, they made so much noise as to wake their father, who came to the window without their perceiving him in the heat of the fray. The Marquis amused himself with watching his two children twisted together like snakes, their faces flushed by the exertion of their strength; their complexion was rose and white, their eyes flashed sparks, their limbs writhed like cords in the fire; they fell, sprang up again, and caught each other like athletes in a circus, affording their father one of those moments of happiness which would make amends for the keenest anxieties of a busy life. Two other persons, one on the second and one on the first floor, were also looking into the garden, and saying that the old madman was amusing himself by making his children fight. Immediately a number of heads appeared at the windows; the Marquis, noticing them, called a word to his sons, who at once climbed up to the window and jumped into his room, and Clément obtained the permission asked by Camille.

All through the house every one was talking of the Marquis' new form of insanity. When Popinot arrived at about twelve o'clock, accompanied by his clerk, the portress, when asked for M. d'Espard, conducted him to the third floor, telling his "as how M. d'Espard, no longer ago than that very morning, had set on his two children to fight, and laughed like the monster he was on seeing the younger biting the elder till he bled, and as how no doubt he longed to see them kill each other.—Don't ask me the reason why," she added; "he doesn't know himself!"

Just as the woman spoke these decisive words, she had brought the judge to the landing on the third floor, face to face with a door covered with notices announcing the successive numbers of the *Picturesque History of China.* The muddy floor, the dirty banisters, the door where the printers had left their marks, the dilapidated window, and the ceiling on which the apprentices had amused themselves with drawing monstrosities with the smoky flare of their tallow dips, the piles of paper and litter heaped up in the corners, intentionally or from sheer neglect—in short, every detail of the picture lying before his eyes, agreed so well with the facts alleged by the Marquise that the judge, in spite of his impartiality, could not help believing them.

"There you are, gentlemen," said the porter's wife; "there is the manifactor, where the Chinese swallow up enough to feed the whole neighborhood."

The clerk looked at the judge with a smile, and Popinot found it hard to keep his countenance. They went together into the outer room, where sat an old man, who, no doubt, performed the functions of office clerk, shopman, and cashier. This old man was the Maître Jacques of China. Along the walls ran long shelves, on which the published numbers lay in piles. A partition in wood, with a grating lined with green curtains, cut off the end of the room, forming a private office. A till with a slit to admit or disgorge crown pieces indicated the cash-desk.

"M. d'Espard?" said Popinot, addressing the man, who wore a gray blouse.

The shopman opened the door into the next room, where the lawyer and his companion saw a venerable old man, white-headed and simply dressed, wearing the Cross of Saint-Louis, seated at a desk. He ceased comparing some sheets of colored prints to look up at the two visitors. This room was an unpretentious office, full of books and proof-sheets. There was a black wood table at which some one, at the moment absent, no doubt was accustomed to work.

"The Marquis d'Espard?" said Popinot.

"No, monsieur," said the old man, rising; "what do you want with him?" he added, coming forward, and showing by his demeanor the dignified manners and habits due to a gentlemanly education.

"We wish to speak to him on business exclusively personal to himself," replied Popinot.

"D'Espard, here are some gentlemen who want to see you," then said the old man, going into the furthest room, where the Marquis was sitting by the fire reading the newspaper.

This innermost room had a shabby carpet, the windows were hung with gray holland curtains; the furniture consisted of a few mahogany chairs, two armchairs, a desk with a revolving front, an ordinary office table, and on the chimney-shelf, a dingy clock and two old candlesticks. The old man led the way for Popinot and his registrar, and pulled forward two chairs, as though he were master of the place; M. d'Espard left it to him. After the preliminary civilities, during which the judge watched the supposed lunatic, the Marquis naturally asked what was the object of this visit. On this Popinot glanced significantly at the old gentleman and the Marquis.

"I believe, Monsieur le Marquis," said he, "that the character of my functions, and the inquiry that has brought me here, make it desirable that we should be alone, though it is understood by law that in such cases the inquiries have a sort of family publicity. I am judge on the Inferior Court of Appeal for the Department of the Seine, and charged by the President with the duty of examining you as to certain facts set forth in a petition for a Commission in Lunacy on the part of the Marquise d'Espard."

The old man withdrew. When the lawyer and the Marquis were alone, the clerk shut the door, and seated himself unceremoniously at the office table, where he laid out his papers and prepared to take down his notes. Popinot had still kept his eye on M. d'Espard; he was watching the effect on him of this crude statement, so painful for a man in full possession of his reason. The Marquis d'Espard,

whose face was usually pale, as are those of fair men, suddenly turned scarlet with anger; he trembled for an instant, sat down, laid his paper on the chimney-piece, and looked down. In a moment he had recovered his gentlemanly dignity, and looked steadily at the judge, as if to read in his countenance the indications of his character.

"How is it, monsieur," he asked, "that I have had no notice of such a petition?"

"Monsieur le Marquis, persons on whom such a commission is held, not being supposed to have the use of their reason, any notice of the petition is unnecessary. The duty of the Court chiefly consists in verifying the allegations of the petitioner."

"Nothing can be fairer," replied the Marquis. "Well, then, monsieur, be so good as to tell me what I ought to do——"

"You have only to answer my questions, omitting nothing. However delicate the reasons may be which may have led you to act in such a manner as to give Madame d'Espard a pretext for her petition, speak without fear. It is unnecessary to assure you that lawyers know their duties, and that in such cases the profoundest secrecy——"

"Monsieur," said the Marquis, whose face expressed the sincerest pain, "if my explanations should lead to any blame being attached to Madame d'Espard's conduct, what will be the result?"

"The Court may add its censure to its reasons for its decision."

"Is such censure optional? If I were to stipulate with you, before replying, that nothing should be said that could annoy Madame d'Espard in the event of your report being in my favor, would the Court take my request into consideration?"

The judge looked at the Marquis, and the two men exchanged sentiments of equal magnanimity.

"Noël," said Popinot to his registrar, "go into the other room. If you can be of use, I will call you in.—If, as I am

inclined to think," he went on, speaking to the Marquis when the clerk had gone out, "I find that there is some misunderstanding in this case, I can promise you, monsieur, that on your application the Court will act with due courtesy."

"There is a leading fact put forward by Madame d'Espard, the most serious of all, of which I must beg for an explanation," said the judge after a pause. "It refers to the dissipation of your fortune to the advantage of a certain Madame Jeanrenaud, the widow of a bargemaster—or rather, to that of her son, Colonel Jeanrenaud, for whom you are said to have procured an appointment, to have exhausted your influence with the King, and at last to have extended such protection as secures him a good marriage. The petition suggests that such a friendship is more devoted than any feelings, even those which morality must disapprove——"

A sudden flush crimsoned the Marquis' face and forehead, tears even started to his eyes, for his eyelashes were wet, then wholesome pride crushed the emotions, which in a man are accounted a weakness.

"To tell you the truth, monsieur," said the Marquis, in a broken voice, "you place me in a strange dilemma. The motives of my conduct were to have died with me. To reveal them I must disclose to you some secret wounds, must place the honor of my family in your keeping, and must speak of myself, a delicate matter, as you will fully understand. I hope, monsieur, that it will all remain a secret between us. You will, no doubt, be able to find in the formulas of the law one which will allow of judgment being pronounced without any betrayal of my confidences."

"So far as that goes, it is perfectly possible, Monsieur le Marquis."

"Some time after my marriage," said M. d'Espard, "my wife having run into considerable expenses, I was obliged to have recourse to borrowing. You know what was the position of noble families during the Revolution; I had not been able to keep a steward or a man of business. Nowadays gentlemen are for the most part obliged to manage their affairs

themselves. Most of my title-deeds had been brought to Paris, from Languedoc, Provence, or le Comtat, by my father, who dreaded, and not without reason, the inquisition which family title-deeds, and what was then styled the 'parchments' of the privileged class, brought down on the owners.

"Our name is Nègrepelisse; d'Espard is a title acquired in the time of Henri IV. by a marriage which brought us the estates and titles of the house of d'Espard, on condition of our bearing an escutcheon of pretence on our coat-of-arms, those of the house of d'Espard, an old family of Béarn, connected in the female line with that of Albret: quarterly, paly of or and sable; and azure two griffins' claws armed, gules in saltire, with the famous motto *Des partem leonis.* At the time of this alliance we lost Nègrepelisse, a little town which was as famous during the religious struggles as was my ancestor who then bore the name. Captain de Nègrepelisse was ruined by the burning of all his property, for the Protestants did not spare a friend of Montluc's.

"The Crown was unjust to M. de Nègrepelisse; he received neither a marshal's bâton, nor a post as governor, nor any indemnity; King Charles IX., who was fond of him, died without being able to reward him; Henri IV. arranged his marriage with Mademoiselle d'Espard, and secured him the estates of that house, but all those of the Nègrepelisses had already passed into the hands of his creditors.

"My great-grandfather, the Marquis d'Espard, was, like me, placed early in life at the head of his family by the death of his father, who, after dissipating his wife's fortune, left his son nothing but the entailed estates of the d'Espards, burdened with a jointure. The young Marquis was all the more straitened for money because he held a post at Court. Being in great favor with Louis XIV., the King's goodwill brought him a fortune. But here, monsieur, a blot stained our escutcheon, an unconfessed and horrible stain of blood and disgrace which I am making it my business to wipe out. I discovered the secret among the deeds relating to the estate of Nègrepelisse and the packets of letters."

At this solemn moment the Marquis spoke without hesitation or any of the repetition habitual with him; but it is a matter of common observation that persons who, in ordinary life, are afflicted with these two defects, are freed from them as soon as any passionate emotion underlies their speech.

"The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was decreed," he went on. "You are no doubt aware, monsieur, that this was an opportunity for many favorites to make their fortunes. Louis XIV. bestowed on the magnates about his Court the confiscated lands of those Protestant families who did not take the prescribed steps for the sale of their property. Some persons in high favor went 'Protestant-hunting,' as the phrase was. I have ascertained beyond a doubt that the fortune enjoyed to this day by two ducal families is derived from lands seized from hapless merchants.

"I will not attempt to explain to you, a man of law, all the manœuvres employed to entrap the refugees who had large fortunes to carry away. It is enough to say that the lands of Nègrepelisse, comprising twenty-two churches and rights over the town, and those of Gravenges which had formerly belonged to us, were at that time in the hands of a Protestant family. My grandfather recovered them by gift from Louis XIV. This gift was effected by documents hall-marked by atrocious iniquity. The owner of these two estates, thinking he would be able to return, had gone through the form of a sale, and was going to Switzerland to join his family, whom he had sent in advance. He wished, no doubt, to take advantage of every delay granted by the law, so as to settle the concerns of his business.

"This man was arrested by order of the governor, the trustee confessed the truth, the poor merchant was hanged, and my ancestor had the two estates. I would gladly have been able to ignore the share he took in the plot; but the governor was his uncle on the mother's side, and I have unfortunately read the letter in which he begged him to apply to Deodatus, the name agreed upon by the Court to designate the King. In this letter there is a tone of jocosity with refer-

ence to the victim, which filled me with horror. In the end, the sums of money sent by the refugee family to ransom the poor man's life were kept by the governor, who despatched the merchant all the same."

The Marquis paused, as though the memory of it were still too heavy for him to bear.

"This unfortunate family were named Jeanrenaud," he went on. "That name is enough to account for my conduct. I could never think without keen pain of the secret disgrace that weighed on my family. That fortune enabled my grandfather to marry a demoiselle de Navarreins-Lansac, heiress to the younger branch of that house, who were at that time much richer than the elder branch of the Navarreins. My father thus became one of the largest landowners in the kingdom. He was able to marry my mother, a Grandlieu of the younger branch. Though ill-gotten, this property has been singularly profitable.

"For my part, being determined to remedy the mischief, I wrote to Switzerland, and knew no peace till I was on the traces of the Protestant victim's heirs. At last I discovered that the Jeanrenauds, reduced to abject want, had left Fribourg and returned to live in France. Finally, I found in M. Jeanrenaud, lieutenant in a cavalry regiment under Napoleon, the sole heir of this unhappy family. In my eyes, monsieur, the rights of the Jeanrenauds were clear. To establish a prescriptive right is it not necessary that there should have been some possibility of proceeding against those who are in the enjoyment of it? To whom could these refugees have appealed? Their Court of Justice was on high, or rather, monsieur, it was here," and the Marquis struck his hand on his heart. "I did not choose that my children should be able to think of me as I have thought of my father and of my ancestors. I aim at leaving them an unblemished inheritance and escutcheon. I did not choose that nobility should be a lie in my person. And, after all, politically speaking, ought those *émigrés* who are now appealing against revolutionary confiscations, to keep the property derived from antecedent confiscations by positive crimes?

"I found in M. Jeanrenaud and his mother the most perverse honesty; to hear them you would suppose that they were robbing me. In spite of all I could say, they will accept no more than the value of the lands at the time when the King bestowed them on my family. The price was settled between us at the sum of eleven hundred thousand francs, which I was to pay at my convenience and without interest. To achieve this I had to forego my income for a long time. And then, monsieur, began the destruction of some illusions I had allowed myself as to Madame d'Espard's character. When I proposed to her that we should leave Paris and go into the country, where we could live respected on half of her income, and so more rapidly complete a restitution of which I spoke to her without going into the more serious details, Madame d'Espard treated me as a madman. I then understood my wife's real character. She would have approved of my grandfather's conduct without a scruple, and have laughed at the Huguenots. Terrified by her coldness, and her little affection for her children, whom she abandoned to me without a regret, I determined to leave her the command of her fortune, after paying our common debts. It was no business of hers, as she told me, to pay for my follies. As I then had not enough to live on and pay for my sons' education, I determined to educate them myself, to make them gentlemen and men of feeling. By investing my money in the funds I have been enabled to pay off my obligation sooner than I had dared to hope, for I took advantage of the opportunities afforded by the improvement in prices. If I had kept four thousand francs a year for my boys and myself, I could only have paid off twenty thousand crowns a year, and it would have taken almost eighteen years to achieve my freedom. As it is, I have lately repaid the whole of the eleven hundred thousand francs that were due. Thus I enjoy the happiness of having made this restitution without doing my children the smallest wrong.

"These, monsieur, are the reasons for the payments made to Madame Jeanrenaud and her son."

"So Madame d'Espard knew the motives of your retirement?" said the judge, controlling the emotion he felt at this narrative.

"Yes, monsieur."

Popinot gave an expressive shrug; he rose and opened the door into the next room.

"Noël, you can go," said he to his clerk.

"Monsieur," he went on, "though what you have told me is enough to enlighten me thoroughly, I should like to hear what you have to say to the other facts put forward in the petition. For instance, you are here carrying on a business such as is not habitually undertaken by a man of rank."

"We cannot discuss that matter here," said the Marquis, signing to the judge to quit the room. "Nouvion," said he to the old man, "I am going down to my rooms; the children will soon be in; dine with us."

"Then, Monsieur le Marquis," said Popinot on the stairs, "that is not your apartment?"

"No, monsieur; I took those rooms for the office of this undertaking. You see," and he pointed to an advertisement sheet, "the *History* is being brought out by one of the most respectable firms in Paris, and not by me."

The Marquis showed the lawyer into the ground-floor rooms, saying, "This is my apartment."

Popinot was quite touched by the poetry, not aimed at but pervading this dwelling. The weather was lovely, the windows were open, the air from the garden brought in a wholesome earthy smell, the sunshine brightened and gilded the woodwork, of a rather gloomy brown. At the sight Popinot made up his mind that a madman would hardly be capable of inventing the tender harmony of which he was at that moment conscious.

"I should like just such an apartment," thought he. "You think of leaving this part of the town?" he inquired.

"I hope so," replied the Marquis. "But I shall remain till my younger son has finished his studies, and till the children's character is thoroughly formed, before introducing them to

the world and to their mother's circle. Indeed, after giving them the solid information they possess, I intend to complete it by taking them to travel to the capitals of Europe, that they may see men and things, and become accustomed to speak the languages they have learned. And, monsieur," he went on, giving the judge a chair in the drawing-room, "I could not discuss the book on China with you, in the presence of an old friend of my family, the Comte de Nouvion, who, having emigrated, has returned to France without any fortune whatever, and who is my partner in this concern, less for my profit than his. Without telling him what my motives were, I explained to him that I was as poor as he, but that I had enough money to start a speculation in which he might be usefully employed. My tutor was the Abbé Grozier, whom Charles X. on my recommendation appointed Keeper of the Books at the Arsenal, which were returned to that Prince when he was still Monsieur. The Abbé Grozier was deeply learned with regard to China, its manners and customs; he made me heir to this knowledge at an age when it is difficult not to become a fanatic for the things we learn. At five-and-twenty I knew Chinese, and I confess I have never been able to check myself in an exclusive admiration for that nation, who conquered their conquerors, whose annals extend back indisputably to a period more remote than mythological or Bible times, who by their immutable institutions have preserved the integrity of their empire, whose monuments are gigantic, whose administration is perfect, among whom revolutions are impossible, who have regarded ideal beauty as a barren element in art, who have carried luxury and industry to such a pitch that we cannot outdo them in anything, while they are our equals in things where we believe ourselves superior.

"Still, monsieur, though I often make a jest of comparing China with the present condition of European states, I am not a Chinaman, I am a French gentleman. If you entertain any doubts as to the financial side of this undertaking, I can prove to you that at this moment we have two thousand

five hundred subscribers to this work, which is literary, iconographical, statistical, and religious; its importance has been generally appreciated; our subscribers belong to every nation in Europe, we have but twelve hundred in France. Our book will cost about three hundred francs, and the Comte de Nouvion will derive from it from six to seven thousand francs a year, for his comfort was the real motive of the undertaking. For my part, I aimed only at the possibility of affording my children some pleasures. The hundred thousand francs I have made, quite in spite of myself, will pay for their fencing lessons, horses, dress, and theatres, pay the masters who teach them accomplishments, procure them canvases to spoil, the books they may wish to buy, in short, all the little fancies which a father finds so much pleasure in gratifying. If I had been compelled to refuse these indulgences to my poor boys, who are so good and work so hard, the sacrifice I made to the honor of my name would have been doubly painful.

"In point of fact, the twelve years I have spent in retirement from the world to educate my children have led to my being completely forgotten at Court. I have given up the career of politics; I have lost my historical fortune, and all the distinctions which I might have acquired and bequeathed to my children; but our house will have lost nothing; my boys will be men of mark. Though I have missed the senatorship, they will win it nobly by devoting themselves to the affairs of the country, and doing such service as is not soon forgotten. While purifying the past record of my family, I have insured it a glorious future; and is not that to have achieved a noble task, though in secret and without glory?—And now, monsieur, have you any other explanations to ask me?"

At this instant the tramp of horses was heard in the courtyard.

"Here they are!" said the Marquis. In a moment the two lads, fashionably but plainly dressed, came into the room, booted, spurred, and gloved, and flourishing their riding-

whips. Their beaming faces brought in the freshness of the outer air; they were brilliant with health. They both grasped their father's hand, giving him a look, as friends do, a glance of unspoken affection, and then they bowed coldly to the lawyer. Popinot felt that it was quite unnecessary to question the Marquis as to his relations towards his sons.

"Have you enjoyed yourselves?" asked the Marquis.

"Yes, father; I knocked down six dolls in twelve shots at the first trial!" cried Camille.

"And where did you ride?"

"In the Bois; we saw my mother."

"Did she stop?"

"We were riding so fast just then that I daresay she did not see us," replied the young Count.

"But, then, why did you not go to speak to her?"

"I fancy I have noticed, father, that she does not care that we should speak to her in public," said Clément in an undertone. "We are a little too big."

The judge's hearing was keen enough to catch these words, which brought a cloud to the Marquis' brow. Popinot took pleasure in contemplating the picture of the father and his boys. His eyes went back with a sense of pathos to M. d'Espard's face; his features, his expression, and his manner all expressed honesty in its noblest aspect, intellectual and chivalrous honesty, nobility in all its beauty.

"You—you see, monsieur," said the Marquis, and his hesitation had returned, "you see that Justice may look in—in here at any time—yes, at any time—here. If there is anybody crazy, it can only be the children—the children—who are a little crazy about their father, and the father who is very crazy about his children—but that sort of madness rings true."

At this juncture Madame Jeanrenaud's voice was heard in the ante-room, and the good woman came bustling in, in spite of the man-servant's remonstrances.

"I take no roundabout ways, I can tell you!" she exclaimed. "Yes, Monsieur le Marquis, I want to speak to you, this

very minute," she went on, with a comprehensive bow to the company. "By George, and I am too late as it is, since Monsieur the criminal Judge is before me."

"Criminal!" cried the two boys.

"Good reason why I did not find you at your own house, since you are here. Well, well! the Law is always to the fore when there is mischief brewing.—I came, Monsieur le Marquis, to tell you that my son and I are of one mind to give you everything back, since our honor is threatened. My son and I, we had rather give you back everything than cause you the smallest trouble. My word, they must be as stupid as pans without handles to call you a lunatic——"

"A lunatic! My father?" exclaimed the boys, clinging to the Marquis. "What is this?"

"Silence, madame," said Popinot.

"Children, leave us," said the Marquis.

The two boys went into the garden without a word, but very much alarmed.

"Madame," said the judge, "the moneys paid to you by Monsieur le Marquis were legally due, though given to you in virtue of a very far-reaching theory of honesty. If all the people possessed of confiscated goods, by whatever cause, even if acquired by treachery, were compelled to make restitution every hundred and fifty years, there would be few legitimate owners in France. The possessions of Jacques Cœur enriched twenty noble families; the confiscations pronounced by the English to the advantage of their adherents at the time when they held a part of France made the fortune of several princely houses.

"Our law allows M. d'Espard to dispose of his income without accounting for it, or suffering him to be accused of its misapplication. A Commission in Lunacy can only be granted when a man's actions are devoid of reason; but in this case, the remittances made to you have a reason based on the most sacred and most honorable motives. Hence you may keep it all without remorse, and leave the world to misinterpret a noble action. In Paris, the highest virtue is the object of

the foulest calumny. It is, unfortunately, the present condition of society that makes the Marquis' actions sublime. For the honor of my country, I would that such deeds were regarded as a matter of course; but, as things are, I am forced by comparison to look upon M. d'Espard as a man to whom a crown should be awarded, rather than that he should be threatened with a Commission in Lunacy.

"In the course of a long professional career, I have seen and heard nothing which has touched me more deeply than that I have just seen and heard. But it is not extraordinary that virtue should wear its noblest aspect when it is practised by men of the highest class.

"Having heard me express myself in this way, I hope, Monsieur le Marquis, that you feel certain of my silence, and that you will not for a moment be uneasy as to the decision pronounced in the case—if it comes before the Court."

"There, now! Well said," cried Madame Jeanrenaud. "That is something like a judge! Look here, my dear sir, I would hug you if I were not so ugly; you speak like a book."

The Marquis held out his hand to Popinot, who gently pressed it with a look full of sympathetic comprehension at this great man in private life, and the Marquis responded with a pleasant smile. These two natures, both so large and full—one commonplace but divinely kind, the other lofty and sublime—had fallen into unison gently, without a jar, without a flash of passion, as though two pure lights had been merged into one. The father of a whole district felt himself worthy to grasp the hand of this man who was doubly noble, and the Marquis felt in the depths of his soul an instinct that told him that the judge's hand was one of those from which the treasures of inexhaustible beneficence perennially flow.

"Monsieur le Marquis," added Popinot, with a bow, "I am happy to be able to tell you that, from the first words of this inquiry, I regarded my clerk as quite unnecessary."

He went close to M. d'Espard, led him into the window-bay,

and said: "It is time that you should return home, monsieur. I believe that Madame la Marquise has acted in this matter under an influence which you ought at once to counteract."

Popinot withdrew. He looked back several times as he crossed the courtyard, touched by the recollection of the scene. It was one of those which take root in the memory to blossom again in certain hours when the soul seeks consolation.

"Those rooms would just suit me," said he to himself as he reached home. "If M. d'Espard leaves them, I will take up his lease."

The next day, at about ten in the morning, Popinot, who had written out his report the previous evening, made his way to the Palais de Justice, intending to have prompt and righteous justice done. As he went into the robing-room to put on his gown and bands, the usher told him that the President of his Court begged him to attend in his private room, where he was waiting for him. Popinot forthwith obeyed.

"Good-morning, my dear Popinot," said the President, "I have been waiting for you."

"Why, Monsieur le Président, is anything wrong?"

"A mere silly trifle," said the President. "The Keeper of the Seals, with whom I had the honor of dining yesterday, led me apart into a corner. He had heard that you had been to tea with Madame d'Espard, in whose case you were employed to make inquiries. He gave me to understand that it would be as well that you should not sit on this case——"

"But, Monsieur le Président, I can prove that I left Madame d'Espard's house at the moment when tea was brought in. And my conscience——"

"Yes, yes; the whole Bench, the two Courts, all the profession know you. I need not repeat what I said about you to his Eminence; but, you know, 'Cæsar's wife must not be suspected.' So we shall not make this foolish trifle a matter of discipline, but only of the proprieties. Between ourselves, it is not on your account, but on that of the Bench."

"But, monsieur, if you only knew the kind of woman——" said the judge, trying to pull his report out of his pocket.

"I am perfectly certain that you have proceeded in this matter with the strictest independence of judgment. I myself, in the provinces, have often taken more than a cup of tea with the people I had to try; but the fact that the Keeper of the Seals should have mentioned it, and that you might be talked about, is enough to make the Court avoid any discussion of the matter. Any conflict with public opinion must always be dangerous for a constitutional body, even when the right is on its side against the public, because their weapons are not equal. Journalism may say or suppose anything, and our dignity forbids us even to reply. In fact, I have spoken of the matter to your President, and M. Camusot has been appointed in your place on your retirement, which you will signify. It is a family matter, so to speak. And I now beg you to signify your retirement from the case as a personal favor. To make up, you will get the Cross of the Legion of Honor, which has so long been due to you. I make that my business."

When he saw M. Camusot, a judge recently called to Paris from a provincial Court of the same class, as he went forward bowing to the Judge and the President, Popinot could not repress an ironical smile. This pale, fair young man, full of covert ambition, looked ready to hang and unhang, at the pleasure of any earthly king, the innocent and the guilty alike, and to follow the example of a Laubardemont rather than that of a Molé.

Popinot withdrew with a bow; he scorned to deny the lying accusation that had been brought against him.

PARIS, *February* 1836.